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Official Magazine - Australia

JULY ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content

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FIRST DETAILS: Why it will change your world!

VERDICT!

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Drop everything - there's a new sheriff in town!

ISSUE 45 JULY 2010
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07

STOP PRESS! KILLZONE 3: FIRST INFO LEAKED - AND YES, IT'S IN 3D!



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PlayStation
Network

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BRINK

In the future, there'll be only war.
But *Brink* proves at least it'll look good.
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DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Hills, thrills and spills await you
in this pure driving game

“It's a ‘too much power, too
little traction’ approach
to the handling”

MARTIN EDMONSON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR



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...you must do in *Red Dead Redemption*. Saddle up; the West just got won. Page 80

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Does it topple *GTA IV* for open world supremacy? Turn over and find out!



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Little people with big heads drive around in circles. We love it!



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Old Prince is back in a brand new story for *The Sands of Time* trilogy.



73 BACKBREAKER

What happens when you cross *GTA IV* with *Madden*? Something like this.



73 SUPERSTARS V8 2

An Italian motor series with nary a race to leaning towers to be seen.



74 SKATE 3

Flip, grind and handplant your way to victory – this time with friends!



75 SBK X

This is possibly the first game we've seen without a vowel in its title. And it's all about motorbikes.



75 3D DOT GAME HEROES

Old school adventuring, in next gen graphics, wrapped around 1980s characters.



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The manliest man in the world, Mike Haggar, returns. Our lives are now complete.



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One game to rule them all?

WAR IN THE NORTH

56

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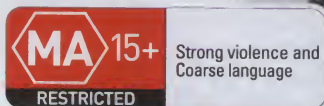
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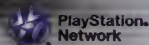
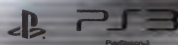
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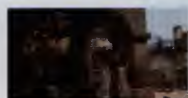
SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Luke Mathew (who just rolled) :: Lucy :: MJ :: Mackie Manor :: The ghost of Joel Graham's moustache :: Shi-maown :: Powderfinger :: Arbie's Nuggz :: The Double Down :: The Irish



LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN:

Capt_Flashheart



PLAYING:

RED DEAD
REDEMPTION



WANTING:

DRIVER: SAN
FRANCISCO

WELCOME!

Last December the Federal Government asked for public input on whether or not Australia should introduce an R18+ rating for games.

The public consultation received almost 60,000 submissions after support was drummed up by local retail chains and R18+ supporter groups.

Unfortunately, it has backfired. The issue has been shelved again pending further investigation. Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor has told the press that more information on the issue was needed because the consultation process had

been dominated by interest groups. Welcome, dear readers, to Democracy in Action!

Colour us shocked that the consultation process attracted mainly submissions from people who were passionate about the issue. One way or another, it's still a result. If Australians opposed to the introduction of an R18+ rating were as abundant and as motivated as those who support an R18+ rating it would have been reflected in the submissions. As it stands, the overwhelming majority of submissions called for an overhaul of our classification scheme. They've been ignored in a case of bureaucracy having its cake and eating it too.

If the consultation process had attracted little interest the issue would've been euthanised. Apparently, however, there is such a thing as *too* much interest.

But really, this is *great* news for children across the country. For the immediate future kids will be able to continue playing games for adults, rated adults-only around the world, that are rated MA15+ in Australia. Australia remains at the *forefront* of allowing minors to legally access violent, mature material that - outside of this country - is restricted to adults.

How's your irony detector these days, Minister?

The results are in, amigo. What's left to ponder?

Uke Reilly

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We want your feedback on your favourite gaming mag, and we have games to give away for filling in our short survey! Go to our Facebook page at www.tinyurl.com/OPSAus for the link and you could win!

OPS ON: THE GREATEST OUTLAW



STEPHANIE GOH
ART DIRECTOR

AI Swarengen, for his entrepreneurial skills in taking from the miners who took from the earth, who himself ended up back in the earth. Deep.

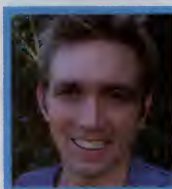
PSN: TBA

PLAYING:

3D Dot Game Heroes

WANTING:

Brink



PAUL TAYLOR
DEPUTY EDITOR

The Milky Bar Kid. How does an eight-year-old get so much confectionary? Dude must robbing corner stores and tuck shops absolutely blind.

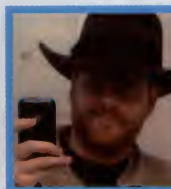
PSN: paulgusta

PLAYING:

Red Dead Redemption

WANTING:

Vanquish



ADAM MATHEW
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Bon Jovi. Dude rides a *steel* horse, carries a *loaded* guitar on his back and uses booze bottles as a substitute calendar. Also, he *rocks* FACES.

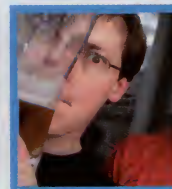
PSN: YoumumsAWESOME

PLAYING:

Red Dead Redemption

WANTING:

Punch My Ride 2



JAMES COTTEE
CONTRIBUTOR

Tough call. Probably a dead heat between the BMX Bandits and the Time Bandits. Least favourite? Software pirates because they rob artists.

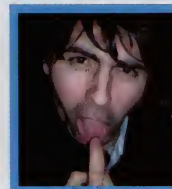
PSN: DrWho3987

PLAYING:

UFC 2010

WANTING:

Monster Hunter Freedom 3



JAMES ELLIS
CONTRIBUTOR

Friar Tuck. The plump bastard bucked the religious stereotype of dodging booze and ministered to a bunch of hoodlums over ale. Nice!

PSN: gtfaster49

PLAYING:

Super Street Fighter IV

WANTING:

Marvel vs. Capcom 3



HANDS-ON

IT ONLY DOES RADSAUCE

It's in the way that you *Move* it...

We recently visited Sydney's fabled 'Sony house' (destination not to be revealed upon pain of death) for the purposes of eating all their popcorn and checking out the PlayStation Move. The results? Glorious.

We took a look at *Sports Champions*, a sports title (no, seriously) that will offer the chance to play activities that included Disc Golf, Gladiator Duel, Volleyball, Archery, Table Tennis and Bocce.

After fighting to get a go, we found that the Move interperated our actions with silky smooth accuracy on-screen. Reaching over our shoulder to 'grab' an arrow

from our virtual quiver and then pulling back the bow to shoot felt pretty damned close to the real thing. Likewise, thrashing about with a sword, blocking attacks with a shield, or perfectly tossing a disc into a goal basket several hundred metres away struck us as very intuitive experiences as well.

Though *Sports Champions* offers three gameplay modes (Free Play, Practice and Challenge Mode), it still felt like a barebones 'proof of concept' sort of thing. Still, the peripherals themselves feel far more accurate than the Wii controller, and they're far more ergonomically pleasing (because they're curved and better suited to larger hands).



THE INNER WORKINGS

The PlayStation Move system is comprised of two peripherals; the PlayStation Move 'motion' controller and the PlayStation Move 'navigation' controller.

Both the Move motion and the Move navigation controllers use Bluetooth 2.0 wireless radio communication, and sport a internal lithium-ion battery which is charged via a USB Mini-B port on the controller. Up to four Move controllers can be used at once (four motion controllers, or two motion controllers and two more navigation controllers).

How do they work? Well, there's a pair of fandangle inertial sensors hidden deep inside the motion

controller – a three-axis linear accelerometer and a three-axis angular rate sensor – which are used to track rotation as well as the overall motion of your hand.

If that isn't enough sci-fi borax for you – the controller also has an internal magnetometer which calibrates the controller's orientation against the Earth's magnetic field to double-check your movements.

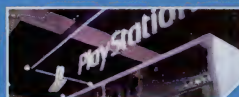
The secondary navigation controller replicates the left side of your standard PlayStation controller (it has an analog stick, L3, a D-pad, X, O, PS button and L1 and R1 analogue triggers).

We'll bring you a roundup of all Move titles after E3.

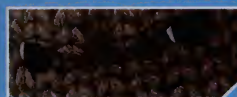




14 IN FOCUS
Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines for *Test Drive Unlimited 2*!



18 AROUND THE WORLD
IN PS3
We head abroad for all that's odd.



24 ANGRY SACKBOY
When you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares into you.



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

ZIT REMEDY IS HERE?

Whoops. When EA released an online demo for *Green Day: Rock Band*, it also managed to include – purposefully, or otherwise – a slight teaser for what certainly looks to be not only the next instalment in the *Rock Band* series, but also the existence of an additional peripheral supported by the game.

Upon exiting the demo, a single image appears on screen showing the usual iconography for guitar, bass, microphones, drums, and... keyboard?

Although it isn't confirmed at the time of writing, we're willing to bet that EA is gonna bust out the keytars. And here we are, without a single hypercolour T-shirt.



GOODBYE VIDEO STORES?

IN A POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS

One other announcement we caught while at the Sydney Sony house was the launch of the PlayStation Network Video Delivery Service. Yes, no longer will decent Australians have to walk to their video stores (like shubs) in order to secure and enjoy movies. This is an on-demand service, with hundreds of

titles available to rent or own, at the click of button.

The wide range of titles on offer will be available in High Definition and Standard Definition, from all the major movie studios, with additional content being added weekly. This awesome new service is live as we speak. Or type. Whatever.

IN SHORT...

Rumour is, Sony will announce a PSN+ premium online service. Subscribers may get exclusive access to the long-awaited cross-game voice chat, along with a cloud-based saving system.



Just a quick reminder; all PlayStation 3 consoles are now 3D stereoscopic 'games-ready' with actual 3D movie capability coming along later in 2010. Score a 3D TV and bust out the glasses.



As the wait for *GT5* continues, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe president Andrew House has offered hope by stating that the MIA car sim will be released "before *LittleBigPlanet 2*".



WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

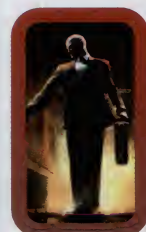
Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



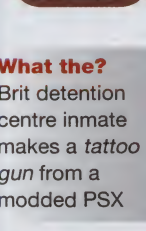
Move
You should feel this thing in motion



Hitchin' for a glitchin'
Hilarious yet harmless bugs found in *RDR*



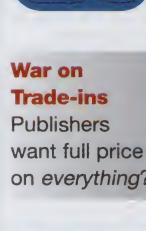
Hitman 5?
IO Interactive says "Yes, there might be a chance"



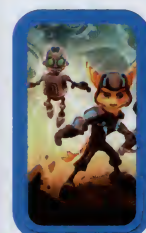
What the?
Brit detention centre inmate makes a tattoo gun from a modded PSX



Shaq Fu, for you
Shaquille O'Neal is in *UFC 2010*



War on Trade-ins
Publishers want full price on everything?



Losing sleep?
Insomniac Games go multi-platform



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Status updates from the digital elite



Phil Welcomes you to Stupid Headgear Wearers Anonymous.

Today 3:46pm • Comment • Like



Phil Our organisation supports people who must wear cranial attire that the rest of society deems utterly impractical or, in some cases, batshit insane.

6 hours ago • Report



Rai Before we kick off the meeting, may I just say how good it is to see so many new faces in the crowd.

5 hours ago • Report



Steve-o Are they new faces though, really? Some of us may have just bought newer, stupider headgear since last time. Which is why I've been pushing for those nametags, Phil...

5 hours ago • Report



Voldo Steve-o the devo is onto something here. I've got an entire wardrobe full of classy headgear for every single day of the week.

2 hours ago • Report



Doviculus Yes. We're all well aware of your... expansive... wardrobe Voldo. And you're in NO position to call Steve-o a devo. Even if it is just a harmless rhyming nickname. Massive glasshouse there, homes. Like, huge.

2 hours ago • Report



Rai Doviculus, you've got no legs to stand on yourself. You're, like, hovering there. Without legs. Furthermore, how the crap do you even see shit? Or do you just molest whatever you bump into?

2 hours ago • Report



Haze guy I would also like to know your sight secret too, Doviculus. With this candy-arse blast shield down I can't even see. How am I supposed to fight?

2 hours ago • Report



Obi-wan Your eyes can deceive you; don't trust them. Stretch out with your feelings.

2 hours ago • Report



Haze guy Screw your hokey old religion, old man. I'm putting my faith in mind-altering drugs.

2 hours ago • Report



Doviculus Technically, Mike and Obi-wan are both correct. I usually just stumble about, find a victim and then use... the Force.

2 hours ago • Report



Phil Well. This meeting's adjourned, pending police investigation. You can all stop hammering the 'report' button now.

1 minute ago • Report

SCREENTEST

Your favourite games as movies

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Justice and vengeance aren't always different things



The Director
Clint Eastwood

The Plot...

Red Dead Redemption is the story of one man's quest for salvation amidst the fading twilight of the Old West. John Marston is an ex-outlaw who has left the life to turn family man, but he's become re-entangled by the ghosts of his past. In a plot partly inspired by Australian Western *The Proposition*, Marston is enlisted (read: blackmailed) into rendering service for the 'right' side of the law. His job: hunt down his former bandit cohorts or else his family gets made gone by his Bureau employers. The line between good and evil is regularly blurred, with Marston's overseers proving to be just as underhanded as the villains he's being paid to bring down.

The Pitch

Four word summary: rootin', tootin' and shootin'. Marston is a textbook example of why cowboys are so iconic and cool (and why they sing a sad, sad song).

Green Light or Development Hell?

Green lit like a go bulb on a traffic light viewed through night vision goggles. If any movie genre deserves to see a resurgence in popularity, it's the Western. Modern day kids with disposable incomes love to idolise bad people who brandish guns. The cowboy is, basically, the superior precursor to the gangsta archetype. Even better; he actually knows how to hold a pistol at the correct angle and doesn't feel the need to pimp out his horse with bigger saddles and stupid chrome horse shoes.

Best Line:

Marston: "I'll give you insight. I'll show you what your guts look like."

The Cast:

Karl Urban as the bad arse John Marston, a pawn in a much larger power struggle.

Hayden Panettiere as Bonnie MacFarlane, a headstrong woman in a man's world.

Chris Cooper as antagonist Bill Williams, former gang partner of John Marston.

Crispin Glover as Seth Briars, resident grave-robbing weirdo.

Danny Trejo as Abraham Reyes, charismatic Mexican revolutionary.

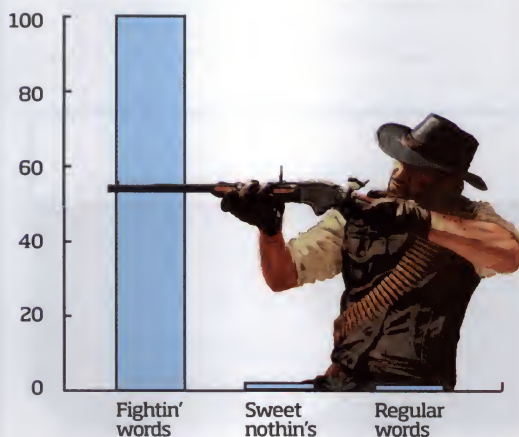
“I'll give you insight. I'll show you what your guts look like”

JOHN MARSTON



OFF THE CHARTS

How polite conversation is interpreted in *Red Dead Redemption's* free roam multiplayer



SEPARATED AT BIRTH!



NO. 17 Halle Berry and *Darksiders'* silver-haired battle angel, Uriel

Now here's a match made in heaven. After playing the nature-wielding Storm in *X-Men*, Halle is a dead ringer for the force of nature that is the archangel Uriel. What else is she really doing these days anyway? She just needs a quick bit of forehead tattooing and we're already most of the way there. That'll come off. Right?

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TOP 10

LEGENDARY GAMES

RE-INTERPRETED BY LEGENDARY GAME DESIGNERS

Every other week someone's covered an MGMT song, or Tim Burton's 're-imagined' a classic film and given it a modern twist. So what would happen if the same thing happened to videogames? The results would look like this

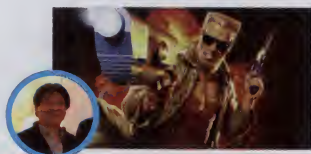
1

CRASH BANDICOOT
 AS DONE BY HIDEO KOJIMA
 (famous for *Metal Gear Solid*)

While Crash's graphical style remains the same, he's more likely to be sneaking past enemies than bouncing on them. When he does smash a crate, Crash now contemplates what it means to be a crate and ponders whether their destruction is totally pointless. Turning the game off for three days makes the wumpa fruit go sour.

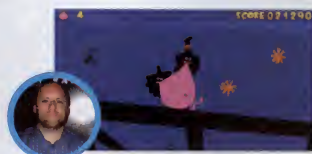


2


DUKE NUKEM BY YOSHINORI KITASE
 (famous for *Final Fantasy VII*)

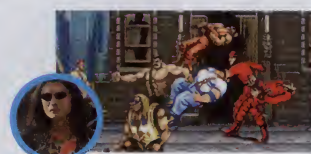
Now known as Duchess Nukem, Duchie's lost the crew cut and sports a hair-do to rival Cloud Strife. He's also 50kg lighter. All battles against aliens are turn-based, and once he's slaughtered hundreds of the beasts Duke has a flashback to his painful childhood. That cut-scene lasts 20 minutes, but it looks fantastic.

3


LOCOROCO BY DAVID CAGE
 (famous for *Heavy Rain*, *Fahrenheit*)

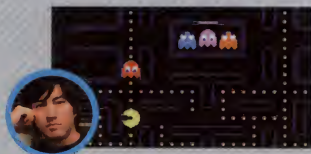
Now with 24 different endings, *LocoRoco* is in 3D with shifting camera angles than slowly pan across industrial skies. The story is told from the perspective of a LocoRoco, their friends the Mui Mui, and also their enemies, the Moja Troop, all at the same time. The happiest game ever just hit a great depression.

4


FINAL FIGHT BY TOMONOBU ITAGAKI
 (famous for *Ninja Gaiden*, *Dead or Alive*)

We'd play this – before crying at the insane difficulty curve. It'd look gorgeous with a gazelle-like frame rate, but what would truly set it apart would be the jiggle physics on Haggar's man-boobs. Do you know how many polygons it would take to build a next-gen Mike Haggar? Double the first number you think of.

5


PAC MAN BY SUDA51 AKA GOICHI SUDA
 (famous for *Killer 7*)

This game highlights Pac-Man's myriad personalities as he races around various cel-shaded mazes.

Your path through the maze is pre-set and the only control over Pac Man is whether you go forward or backward. Puzzles sporadically occur.

6


GTA IV BY PETER MOLYNEUX
 (famous for everything)

It's going to be bigger and better than any other GTA game ever made, with no on-screen interface, and features never before seen or even imagined in this ultimate human drama. To even discuss its possibilities would lessen its impact once you do get to see it. And then it gets released and has none of these.

7


SONIC THE HEDGEHOG BY RYOZO TSUJIMOTO
 (famous for *Monster Hunter Freedom 2*)

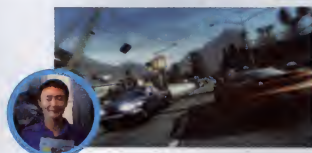
Still in 2D and with a smackably-cute sidekick, but with more of a focus on collecting and combining tiny, incrementally different gems from every enemy in that stage to get better shoes, lower-resistance spines, difference coloured skin, zany sunglasses, etc.

8


SILENT HILL BY TIM SCHAFER
 (famous for *Brütal Legend*, *Psychonauts*)

After his work on *Psychonauts*, Schafer's the best man for this psychological terror. Gameplay and themes would therefore remain 90 per cent intact but with a completely revamped script and score. Gone are the heavy chords and ominous stabbing strings, and in its place is a *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* style romp. Plus, tonnes of puns.

9


BURNOUT BY KAZUNORI YAMAUCHI
 (famous for *Gran Turismo*)

Before you even begin to even think about tearing up the streets with your Jensen whatever in this open-world racer, you must earn your Burnout licence, beginning with some 'brake in the zone' thing with the slowest car ever, then another with the second-slowest car ever. There's no damage either. None.

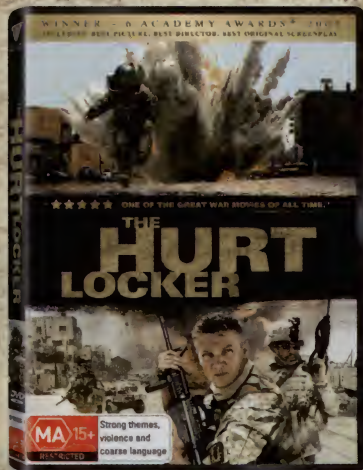
10


LEISURE SUIT LARRY BY DAN HOUSER
 (famous for the *Grand Theft Auto*)

A series reboot while retaining core character traits. Larry is still a lovable loser and a sex-addict. The supporting cast is all of Larry's ex-girlfriends or girls he's chased in the past. The game will barely scrape through the classification process, due to unprecedented amounts of full-frontal nudity. You'll buy it in a lusty heartbeat.

THE HURT LOCKER

"★★★★½ ...TENSE, BRILLIANT AND HORRIFYING
...AMONG THE GREAT FILMS OF THE YEAR." – EVAN WILLIAMS, THE AUSTRALIAN

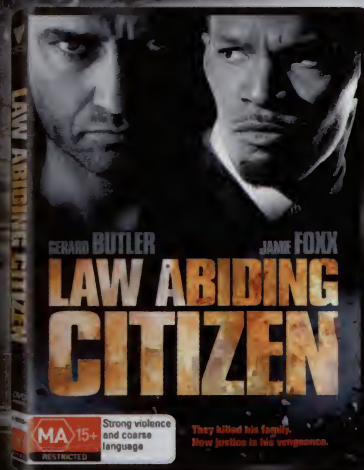


OUT JUNE 25

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LAW ABIDING CITIZEN

They killed his family. Now justice is his vengeance.



OUT NOW

© 2009 LAC FILMS, LLC

JIM CAVIEZEL CLAUDIA KARVAN

LONG WEEKEND

DON'T MESS WITH
MOTHER NATURE.



OUT JUNE 17

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LOU TAYLOR PUCCI CHRIS PINE PIPER PERABO EMILY VANCAMP

CARRIERS



OUT NOW

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For full terms & conditions visit www.dvdrewards.com.au. NSW Permit No. LTPS/10/1401. VIC Permit No. 10/497. ACT Permit No. TP10/620.
M Recommended for mature audiences MA15+ Not suitable for people under 15. Under 15s must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian

**DVD
REWARDS**

INFOCUS

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2

Set on Ibiza – the party island of *Venga Boys* fame (though the word ‘fame’ is probably stretching it) – *TDU2* will feature dynamic weather effects, day and night cycles, and vehicle damage. It also has a two person ‘co-op drive’ mode.



Modern cars – they all look like electric shavers



“New vehicle classes will be added, **including SUVs and 4WDs for offroading**”



"For years I have searched for a car that was powerful like a gorilla, yet soft and yielding like a Nerf ball..."



"After a while players can return to an **expanded and updated Oahu** from the previous game"



A shot of a Dodge in it's natural state (completely out of control)



The Ford GT: almost as wide as your mother-in-law. But not quite



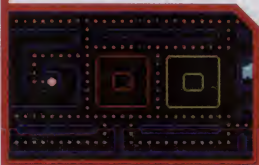
AROUND THE WORLD **IN PS3**

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



SILICON VALLEY, USA PILL POPPING

Google likes to do things differently and in honour of the 30th anniversary of PacMan, the site transformed its usual Google emblem into a playable, 256 levels, full-on game of PacMac. It even had sound! It only stuck around for 48 hours but it was pretty rad while it lasted. While Google has created more than 300 unique 'doodles' in the US, and over 700 internationally, this is the first time a doodle has been playable or had sound.



LOS ANGELES, USA THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

As you read this we'll be at E3 digging up every detail we can on all the year's hottest games. That is, unless you're reading this in a barbershop or dentist in 2012. In that case, E3 2010 will be a distant memory. At any rate, do not miss next issue – because it's going to be huge. PlayStation Move, *Gran Turismo 5*, and much, much more! Who knows what other surprises are in store? Not us. Yet.



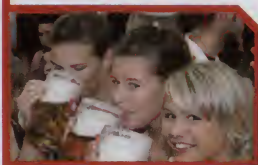
PROVIDENCIA, CHILE SHARING IS CARING

Have you ever got into a fight with a sibling over something stupid? Of course you have. Has it ever devolved into physical violence? Probably. Kids have short fuses. Have you ever stabbed them? To death? Wait, what? Two teenage brothers in Providencia, Chile got into a fight over their PlayStation, which ended with the younger brother *stabbing his older brother*, who later died of his wounds. Sharing, kids. It's what adjusted people do!



BERLIN, GERMANY SIEG FAIL

The Bundestag, Germany's Parliament, has received over 73,000 signatures on a petition that opposes the enactment of a violent games ban. The petition passed the required 50,000 mark to be reviewed and discussed by the government. It was recommended that better education on the PEGI game ratings take place in lieu of an outright ban. Our own Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor could learn something here.



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA THE DA VINCI CODE

Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Mechanical Knight' goes on display at Sydney Town Hall. Driven by a propeller, powered by wind or water, the 600-year-old robot is capable of doing stuff without human intervention, such as playing a beat on the drums and moving each of its limbs. Too bad he wasn't *making us robots* when we were busy getting 'stabby' as Ezio Auditore. But then again, maybe he was too busy writing his other 50,000+ codex pages.



INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- 1 Red Dead Redemption Rockstar
- 2 FIFA World Cup 2010 EA
- 3 ModNation Racers Sony
- 4 Split/Second Disney
- 5 Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA
- 6 POP: The Forgotten Sands Ubisoft
- 7 Lost Planet 2 Capcom
- 8 GTA: Episodes from Liberty City Rockstar
- 9 Skate 3 EA
- 10 Modern Warfare 2 Activision



JAPAN

Source: VGCHARTZ

- 1 FIFA World Cup 2010 EA
- 2 NieR ReplICA Square Enix
- 3 Super Street Fighter IV Capcom
- 4 Pro Yakyuu Spirits 2010 Konami
- 5 Hokuto Musou Koei
- 6 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion Bethesda
- 7 Ryu Ga Gotoku 4 Sega
- 8 MGS4: Guns of the Patriots Konami
- 9 Demon's Souls Sony
- 10 BioHazard 5 Capcom



USA

Source: NPD

- 1 Lost Planet 2 Capcom
- 2 Skate 3 EA
- 3 3D Dot Game Heroes Atlus
- 4 God of War III Sony
- 5 Super Street Fighter IV Capcom
- 6 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 7 God of War Collection Sony
- 8 LittleBigPlanet Sony
- 9 Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix
- 10 GTA: Episodes from Liberty City Rockstar

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TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON

Experience the legendary battle between the Autobots and Decepticons before their exodus to Earth in the untold story of the civil war for their home planet, Cybertron. Two distinct and intertwined campaigns chronicle the Autobots heroism in the face of total annihilation and the Decepticons unquenchable thirst for power. Play both campaigns in team-based online co-op, or go head-to-head in several online multiplayer game modes.



EB GAMES \$78

Estimated Dispatch Date: 25 June 2010

Special Offer:

Shockwave & Jazz Multiplayer Unlocks

JB HIFI \$74.98

Estimated Dispatch Date: 25 June 2010

Special Offer:

A bonus full size transformers comic book

NAUGHTY BEAR

Striking terror in the hearts of all bears, rocks. *Naughty Bear* plays differently every time with a huge number of choices the players can make. Watch the bears gang up on you, form "factions" and work together to evade "the Fuzz", and increasingly dangerous Teddies as they scramble to react to your extreme naughtiness. Earn points through scares, intimidation and kills - rack up the points as you rack up the body count.



EB GAMES \$108

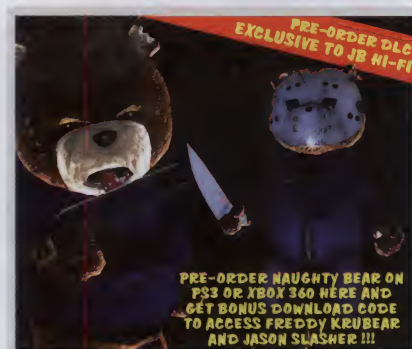
Estimated Dispatch Date:
24 June 2010

JB HIFI \$89

Estimated Dispatch Date:
24 June 2010

Special Offer:

Bonus unlock code for
Freddy Krubear and
Jason Slasher



LEGO HARRY POTTER YEARS 1 - 4

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 will give gamers the chance to experience the magic and adventure of Harry Potter in a new and uniquely LEGO way. Playing as Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger and other favourite characters, gamers will cast spells, mix potions, and fly on broomsticks. Throughout the game, players will also have the freedom to explore iconic settings including Hogwarts castle, Diagon Alley, the Forbidden Forest and the village of Hogsmeade!

GAME \$79 (online only, Collector's Edition)

Estimated Dispatch Date: 30 June 2010

JB HIFI \$84.98

Estimated Dispatch Date: 30 June 2010

Special offer: Collector's for standard price



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

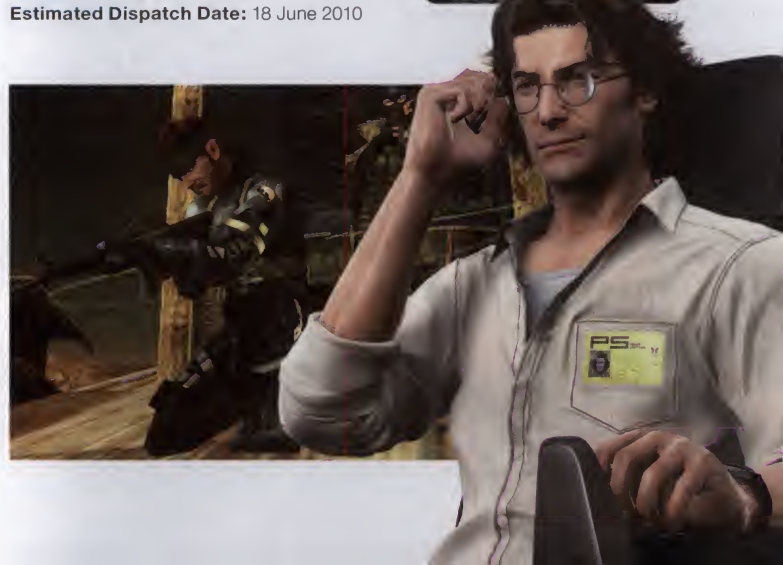
Series creator Hideo Kojima has crafted *Peace Walker* as the next true chapter in the story of legendary special ops expert, Naked Snake (a.k.a. Big Boss), and acts as a direct sequel to the previously released *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*. Developed specifically for the PSP, *Peace Walker* is set in 1974 towards the end of the cold war and boasts an all-new story penned by Hideo Kojima.

GAME \$59

Estimated Dispatch Date: 18 June 2010

EB Games \$68

Estimated Dispatch Date: 18 June 2010



A SMARTER ALTERNATIVE

The new Android™-powered HTC Desire smartphone has finally arrived – and is available exclusively from Telstra

ON THE OUTSIDE

The HTC Desire is a slick new smartphone with an expansive 3.7-inch AMOLED display delivering images that are crisp with true colour brilliance. The subtle yet stylish outer shell and intuitive handset controls are simply the pinnacle of design. However, it is what's on the inside of this revolutionary device that will have you truly amazed.

FOR TOTAL PERSONALISATION

The Android operating system and HTC's Sense user interface allow you to take control of your smartphone in ways you have always dreamed of. Now you can customise how your Home screen appears and what information it carries. Choose from a wide variety of widgets and shortcuts to get your phone working the way you want it to.

FOR ULTIMATE COMMUNICATION

Staying in touch has never been easier. The HTC Desire features an innovative functionality that allows you to look up a contact's email, SMS, Facebook® or Twitter™ updates and photo posts with just a simple tap of the touchscreen – all without launching an app or browser!

FOR BETTER BROWSING

Surfing the mobile web has now become a seamless experience. The HTC Desire's mobile internet browser supports Adobe Flash content. Pages load smoothly and quickly, and can be viewed using multi-touch 'pinch-zooming' that not only enlarges text but also instantly snaps it into place in a more readable window.

FOR SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE

Packing a powerful 1GHz Snapdragon processor and 576MB of RAM, the Desire zips through multiple application launches and large data downloads with the greatest of ease. And with a 5MP camera, GPS receiver, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, it has the muscle to perform any task you throw at it. The Android powered HTC is faster and works better in more places on the Next G™ network.

EXCLUSIVE \$79 CAP PLAN FROM TELSTRA

Get the new HTC Desire for just \$79 per month for 24 months* on Telstra's superior Next G™ network. This includes \$750 worth of calls or SMS to handsets that are on ANY other network plus 500MB of data so you can easily stay in touch with your friends via Facebook and Twitter. Head to your local Telstra store or call Telstra on **1800 050 381** to take advantage of this exclusive deal. You can also get more information online by heading to <http://telstra.com.au/android>

*Min cost is \$1896

The Cap Plan offer excludes some usage, including premium, satellite calls, operator assisted calls, content charges (e.g. apps you download) and use while overseas. Standard charges apply for excluded usage and for usage over \$750. Unused calls, texts and data expire monthly.



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INSIDER

JUNE 11 THE A-TEAM

You know the drill – four former members of the US military have become mercenaries. This time, they are arrested for a crime they didn't commit. Branded war criminals, they must now fight off those trying to capture them and find the real culprits.

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and goodness!



JUNE 16 STATE OF ORIGIN: GAME 2

We'd like to pick a side (go NSW!) but we're totally diplomatic (go NSW!). It's gonna be a cracking night! Will Queensland break all records by taking out a fifth consecutive series or can the Blues bounce back? (go NSW!)

JUNE 16 NAUGHTY BEAR

Eat your heart out Jason, there's a new psychotic killer roaming free and killing at will – and he's damned adorable. He won't be using the bare essentials when he tells the other teddies to get stuffed.



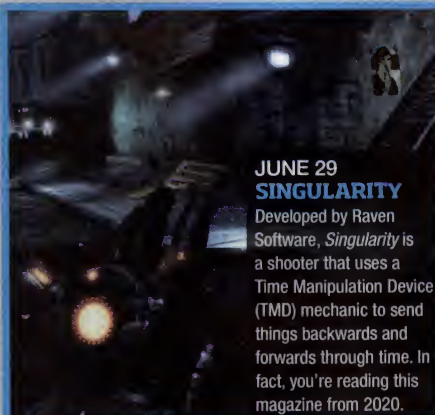
JUNE 19 AUSSIE AUSSIE AUSSIE

Our very own Wallabies go head-to-head with England in the Bundaberg Rum Rugby series. Come of boys; don't let those Poms re-live their World Cup glory!



JUNE 26 TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON

Rest assured we'll be gleefully rolling out to play this online. Usually we'd say 'you'll definitely see us online', but, frankly, with our invisibility powerup – you won't. Ghost kills, y'all.



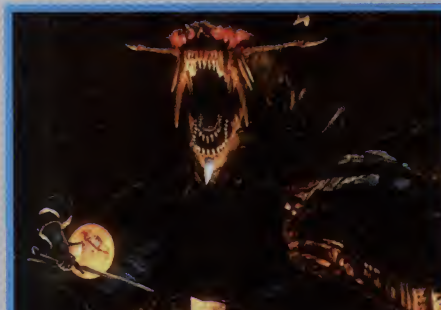
JUNE 29 SINGULARITY

Developed by Raven Software, *Singularity* is a shooter that uses a Time Manipulation Device (TMD) mechanic to send things backwards and forwards through time. In fact, you're reading this magazine from 2020.



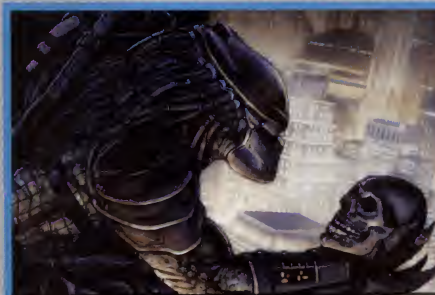
JUNE 30 LEGO HARRY POTTER YEARS 1-4

Get your block on – again. This time, LEGO had been used reinvent Harry and his chums. A build-your-own character would be good: a troll and Ron's head, a dragon and Ron's head, etc.



JUNE 30 DEMON'S SOULS

Fans of RPGs – especially RPGs that are dark, mysterious and harder than Chuck Norris' chest hairs – have probably circled this date in big, red, permanent text on their calendars.



JULY 9 PREDATORS

Time to expect the blood when mercenaries, convicts, death squad members and even the Yakuza get sent to another planet to be hunted by the Predators. It'll be a bit like *Avatar*, but less blue and more... red.



JULY 14 THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS

This Blu-ray release follows Ann Arbor Daily Telegram reporter Bob Wilton (Ewan McGregor), who stumbles across Lyn Cassidy (George Clooney). Lyn reveals that he was part of an American army unit training psychic spies (or "Jedi Warriors"). Buy it from www.billybluray.com.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you!

OUT NOW

Red Dead Redemption
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Skate 3
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

ModNation Racers
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

Alpha Protocol
Genre: Action RPG
Distributor: Sega

Blur
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Activision

JUNE

LEGO Harry Potter
Genre: Family
Distributor: Warner Bros.

Naughty Bear
Genre: Action
Distributor: AIE

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

Singularity
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Activision

Green Day: Rock Band
Genre: Music
Distributor: EA

JULY

Clash of the Titans
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

AUGUST

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Mafia II
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

Madden NFL 11
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

SEPTEMBER

Dead Rising 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

Formula 1 2010
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Genre: Action
Distributor: Mindscape

R.U.S.E.
Genre: RTS
Distributor: Ubisoft

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

OCTOBER

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

International Cricket 2010
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

F.3.A.R.
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Warner Bros.

Splatterhouse
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Medal of Honor
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

NOVEMBER

Call of Duty: Black Ops
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Activision

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Sony

TBA 2010

AFL 10
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Sony

Agent
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Brink
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Bethesda

Fallout: New Vegas
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

WRC
Genre: Racing
Distributor: AFA

L.A. Noire
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Rockstar

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Gran Turismo 5
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

Max Payne 3
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

Test Drive Unlimited 2
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

True Crime
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

Homefront
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: THQ

Rock Band 3
Genre: Music
Distributor: EA

EA Sports MMA
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

Pure Football
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Ubisoft

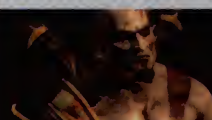
Crysis 2
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

Driver: San Francisco
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Ubisoft

SOCOM 4
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Sony

Bulletstorm
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

AUSSIE CHARTS



1 **God of War III**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony



2 **FIFA World Cup 2010**
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA



3 **Super Street Fighter IV**
Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ



4 **Modern Warfare 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision



5 **Skate 3**
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA



6 **GTA: Episodes from Liberty City**
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar



7 **Final Fantasy XIII**
Genre: RPG Distributor: Ubisoft



8 **Battlefield: Bad Company 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA



9 **Heavy Rain**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony



10 **Need for Speed: SHIFT**
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA

“QUOTE UNQUOTE”

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



“Our games are not designed for young people. If you’re a parent and buy one of our games for your child you’re a terrible parent.”

Rockstar producer Lazlow Jones say it how it is.



“Gran Turismo 5 is about 90 per cent finished. There are currently around 140 people working on the project.”

Perfectionist Kazunori Yamauchi’s latest update on the status of *GTS*.



“It is worth noting that ultimately, the decision does not rest with me alone.”

John Rau, the South Australian Attorney-General on the (now shelved, again) R18+ rating issue.



“We would love to see the PS3 be more open like a Mac than more closed like a Gamecube.”

Valve CEP and long-time PS3 basher Gabe Newell on what he would like to see from Sony.



OPINION

OFFICIAL
PLAYSTATION
ADAM MATHEW

PROGNOSIS: IT'S NOT PLAYSTATION LUPUS

Well, it's official. Your beloved PlayStation 3 is now a harbinger of sickness, and the doctors even have an allitericious name for the disease - Playstation Purpura. Dr. Lei Z. Google defines the medical term thusly; "Purpura: any of several blood diseases causing subcutaneous bleeding". Holy *shitballs*, right? Isn't a plague of weeping hand sores the very first sign of the... [gasp]... apocalPS3?!

No. It really, really isn't.

“The patient was told to cease and desist from gaming for a while”

According to a recent article in an Australian medical newspaper, *6 Minutes*, this alarming - dare we say, *potentially afternoon destroying* - disease has been uncovered in the dermatologist halls of justice in Melbourne. Doctors were perplexed by a series of bruises on the index fingers of a 16-year-old boy and were initially convinced it was some sort of cancer (with dermatologists, the go-to prognosis is always cancer - discovering über pimples and mega-dandruff won't get

you a Nobel prize, or bitches). However, once their patient informed them he just played PlayStation for a couple of hours every day, some out-of-touch, university-educated epidermises turned a bright shade of red.

Sure enough, the discolouration and bruising lined up perfectly to where each finger touched the PlayStation controller and this "constant abuse" along with the vibration feedback was enough to diagnose the phenomenon as Playstation Purpura. The patient was told to cease and desist from gaming for a while and - lo and behold - his condition cleared up with no side effects. Puh-raise Jeebus! Miracles can happen.

This isn't the first time the condition has popped up though, Swiss doctors started their own PlayStation witch-hunt "condition", dubbed *PlayStation palmar hidradenitis*. After examining a 17-year-old girl afflicted with painful bumps on the palms of her hands, the sawbones were convinced it was related to sweating (or maybe, like, *super cancer*). The quacks eventually reached another diagnosis after being told that she was just playing a butt-load of PlayStation. Once again, after 10 days spent away from gaming, her condition just... disappeared.

No shit, Dr. House.

To their credit - and despite this new 'condition' being unfairly named after their brand - Sony showed restraint in an official response: "As with any leisure pursuit there are possible consequences of not following common sense, health advice and guidelines, as can be found within our instruction manuals. We do not wish to belittle this research and will study the findings with interest. This is the first time we have ever heard of a complaint of this nature."

I will offer no such restraint in my own response to the disorder; are you freakin' serious? Folks who are too idiotic to see a correlation between "my finger bones are showing", "I'm gripping this like the Boston strangler" and "maybe I should hit the showers" - deserve everything their pansy hands get.

What happened to growing calluses like any other person - anywhere, *ever* - who does stuff with their hands? Doctors should label this conditon with the hilarious blanket term "wankeritis", rather than besmirching the name of a company whose joy-providing excellence exponentially eclipses the isolated whinges of numbskulls who need a world made of Nerf.

Adam Mathew has no problems with hand sores, but his jaw is permanently locked open.

Q. WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY?

- A. WORLD CLASS DEGREE**
- B. GUARANTEED JOB**
- C. GREAT SALARY**
- D. FREE TUITION**
- E. ALL OF THE ABOVE**

If your answer was E, you should consider studying for your degree at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). ADFA is a campus of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) located in Canberra. Here you can get a degree in Arts, Business, Engineering, Science or Technology and you'll also learn the leadership skills you'll need as an officer in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

There are all kinds of officer positions available from Administration and Logistics through to Aviation, Intelligence and Engineering. You could become a Marine Engineer in the Navy, a Pilot in the Army, or even an Air Combat Officer in the Air Force – there are dozens of exciting positions open to you.

If you decide you want to become an officer and earn a degree, ADFA is a great way to make it happen. We'll pay you between \$26,000 and \$40,500 per year to study, plus pay for your tuition fees (HELP, previously known as HECS fees), your medical and dental care, most of your textbooks and we'll subsidise your accommodation. Of course you will then get paid a full officer salary package of over \$70,000 per year upon graduating from ADFA and completion of your specific employment training.

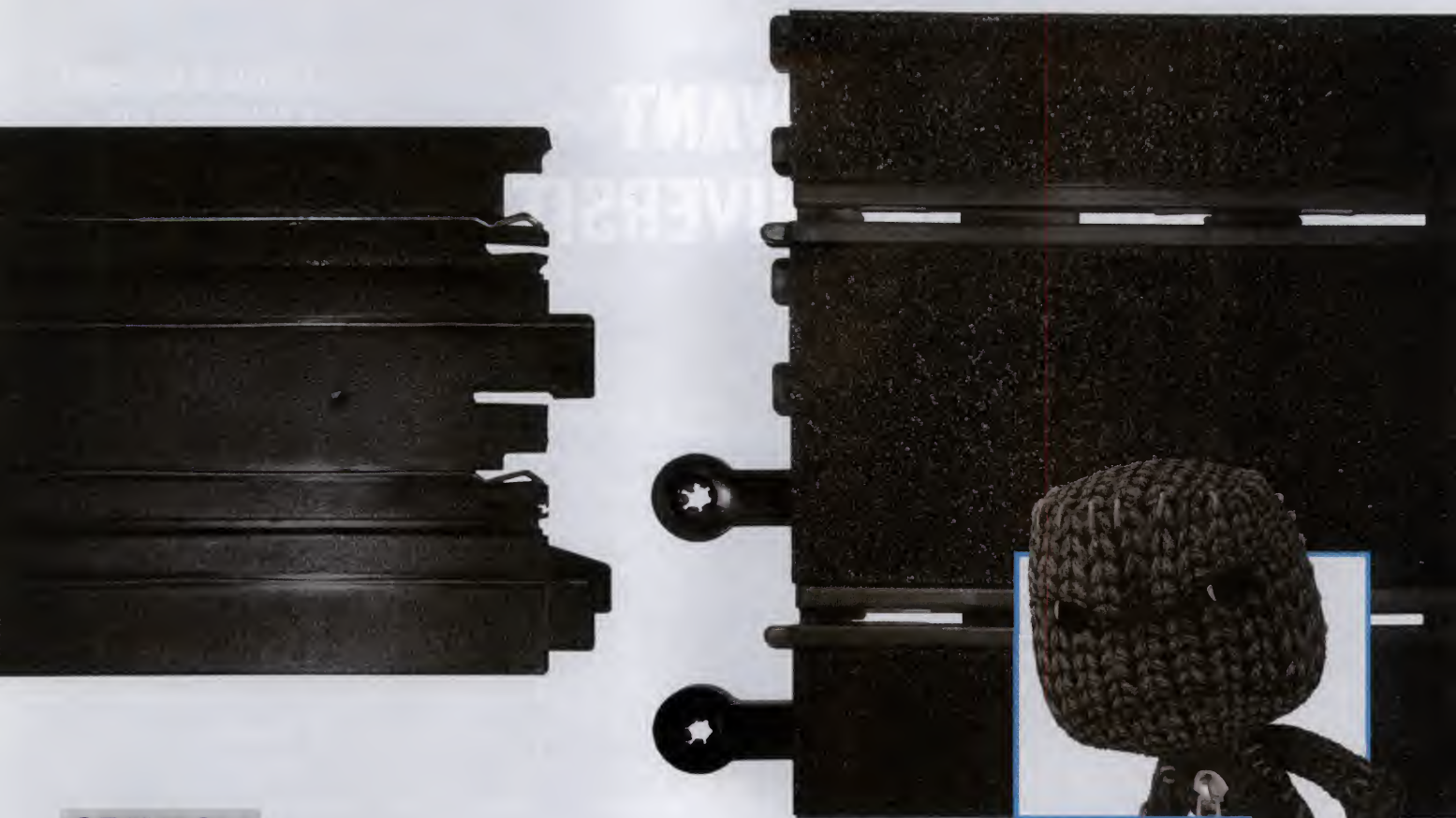
If you are currently studying Year 11, you could also be eligible to apply for the ADFA Education Award where the most outstanding applicants will be awarded a laptop computer.

So ask yourself one question:

Will another university offer you the challenges and responsibilities of leadership that only ADFA can provide?

To find out more about ADFA call **13 19 01** or visit
www.defencejobs.gov.au/adfa





OPINION

KNOCK DOWN REBUILD

When I was a kid I was given a Scalextric set. It was awesome. I don't know if kids play with Scalextric anymore, but when I was a kid videogames looked like a monkey's breakfast – so playing with Scalextric was as close to the real thing as you could get beyond backing your parents' car out of the driveway.

Two years later I got an AFX set.

AFX is superior to Scalextric in a variety of ways. It clicks together far more easily, which I always liked. It also has loops. Loops to a small boy are like chocolate-coated sugar-frosted crack. In terms of cool they sit somewhere between T.rexes and the first time your dad let you sit down with him to watch *Die Hard*.

But Scalextric is still awesome. You might

“You might as well trade in your Y chromosome if you don't already know the difference between the two”

as well trade in your Y chromosome if you don't already know the difference between the two, but the crucial point is they're not compatible with each other. I couldn't ever play with both at once, so I had to choose one over the other.

My parents could've got me another Scalextric set so I could've combined the two and made the living room equivalent of the Nürburgring. This would've been the most exciting thing to happen to my 11-year-old self until the dawn of Internet pornography. But it wasn't to be. Even as a kid I could see the missed opportunity here.

So why do we put up with it in videogames?

There are some titles that are embracing the concept of cross compatibility, but most do not. One moment you're enjoying something, and the next you're asked to leave it all behind and start over.

I didn't come down in the last shower. I'm aware technology moves along at hyperspeed, and games are no different. There are a great many games that simply can't bring along baggage.

But there are many that could, and don't.



OFFICIAL
PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

Why do we have to always start over?

Owners of *Rock Band* can export entire tracklists from discs and, along with years worth of downloadable content, play ALL these songs in the most current incarnation of the game. *LittleBigPlanet 2* will also support previously created content.

Why then, is it not possible to do this with the likes of shooters, or racing games? Think of the possibilities. Imagine being able to export the multiplayer maps from *Modern Warfare* to play in *Modern Warfare 2*. You'd instantly double the size of the multiplayer experience.

Gran Turismo legend Kazunori Yamauchi told us at TGS last year the inevitable *GT6* wouldn't take anywhere near as long as *GT5* to produce because so much of the work would already be done. That's good news, but what'd be more exciting is if *Gran Turismo* became a platform unto itself.

Rock Band 2 didn't give us any of the same songs as the original. If you wanted those songs, you bought the original. Imagine if *GT6* came with all different cars and tracks, and you could export all the cars and tracks from *GT5* to your PS3 to use in *GT6*. Then you end up with ONE racing game with TWICE as many cars and tracks.

What part of this is a *bad* idea?

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist who will totally murder you at Scalextric. Really.



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COMPETITIONS

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WIN!

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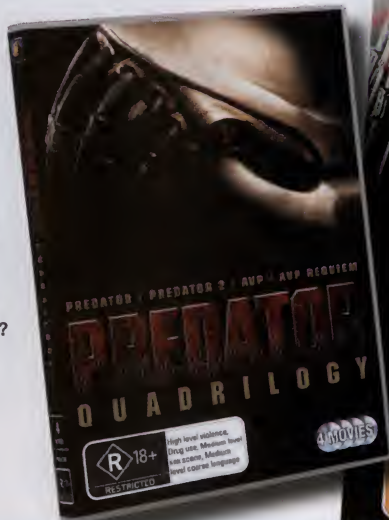
In cinemas July 8, *Predators* is a bold new chapter in the *Predator* universe. Directed by Robert Rodriguez, it stars Adrien Brody as Royce, a cold-blooded mercenary whose only allegiance is to those who pay him. He reluctantly leads a group of elite warriors who come to realise they've been brought together on an alien planet... as prey.

Thanks to Twentieth Century Fox, we have 15 box sets of the *Predator* series to give away that pack in *Predator*, *Predator 2*, *Alien vs. Predator*, *Aliens vs. Predator - Requiem* for our main winners, and also 10 double-passes to see the new *Predators* movie for our lucky runners-up. For your chance to win, simply answer this question and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: in 25 words or less, what would be your ultimate versus match-up and why?



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WIN!

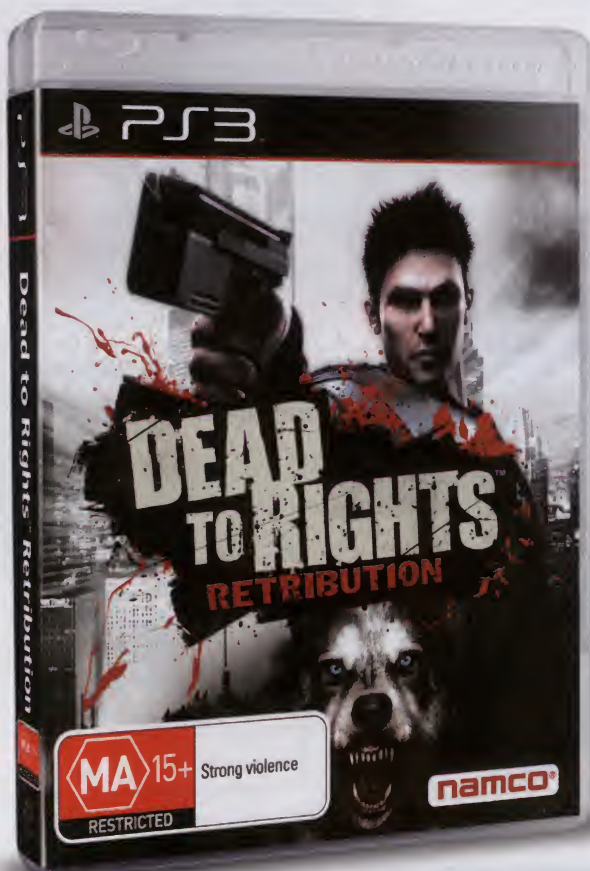
DOGGONE

In stores now, *Dead to Rights: Retribution* is a bloody dose of canine justice! When Jack Slate and his faithful mutt Shadow hit the streets of crime-ridden Grant City, no scumbag is safe from a bullet in the head or a bite on the balls. We're not making that up. Some of *Retribution*'s ingredients are tastier than you'd expect. The Shadow levels, for instance, are tops. Running about tearing people's throats out as an insane attack beast is great fun. We like them a lot. The cinematics, while cobbled together

from the '90s cop movie handbook, are more polished than most – and the action is decent too.

Thanks to Namco Bandal Partners we've secured a massive prize pack including a copy of *Dead to Rights: Retribution*, an Alpine Stars jacket, a pair of Alpine Stars shoes, a T-shirt PLUS two tickets to the MotoGP in Phillip Island!

Question: In 25 words or less, what's your dog's name and why does he or she rock?



HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@themediainfactory.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355**. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 20/07/2010. Winners will be notified by mail.

DON'T TURN A NIGHT OUT

70 Australians under 25 will be hospitalised
due to alcohol-caused assault in an average week

www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnight

INTO A NIGHTMARE

SHORT & SWEET

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Great magazine, love reading it every month and eagerly await its arrival in the mail. It definitely helps in making the decision of which games to rent over the next month. Why rent? Well, obviously buying a new game every month is quite a costly exercise, but it's not that I struggle with. It's time. Being married and working a 40+ hour week, finding the time to play a game has become shorter and shorter. On average I'm able to play about four hours a week of gaming – a small fraction of what I used to be able to play.

One of the things that I love the most about playing games is reaching the end of the game and watching the credits roll knowing you've just kicked serious arse. Whilst collecting Trophies is enjoyable, and exploring vast endless landscapes tends to not get too tiring, there is just some downright good warm feeling that you get when you complete a game – fighting off the wave of Big Daddies in *BioShock 2*, throwing the knife in *Modern Warfare 2*. These are relatively short games – I managed to knock *Modern Warfare 2* over in about five hours and felt absolutely fine about it.

After hiring out *Heavy Rain* and brushing my teeth, having a shower, playing with my kids, I came to two conclusions. Games need a fast forward button. If they're going to be anything like as cinematic as *Heavy Rain* or *God Of War III*, then a fast forward button is in dire need. There were some parts in *Heavy Rain* which you just wanted to quickly speed past, but the same could be said for any game. There are so many great games that are released, and obviously the ability to play them all is impossible, so to be able to skip to the best parts would be ideal.



➤ Pffftt... skip!

Failing that, short games that can be done within five hours would be brilliant. Whilst there are some games that are over and done with in a five hour period, most of them suck. There's simply nothing wrong with a short five hour game that is kickass – *Modern Warfare 2* was an insanely brilliant package, the Spec Ops missions made for easy dip in/dip out gaming – but I would have preferred to be able to pay a smaller cost for the game itself and forgo the multiplayer. I know that there are games available on the PSN and most are pretty darn good, but brilliant shorter games rather than blown out extensive games which are full of padding should be the order of the day.

Andrew Peirce, WA

We tend to agree, Andrew. With the average age of gamers in Australia, and elsewhere around the world, over 30, there's a good argument to cater to the time poor among us. We don't think there's anything wrong with short or long games, as long as they're good. Still, we would've loved to "fast forward" through the first 90 minutes of *Heavy Rain*, because it just plodded too much. We're sure we would've got the gist of it.

Anyway, have a copy of *Red Dead Redemption* for your trouble. If four hours a week is the rate you play – and we believe you – you should *probably* be done by Christmas.



Letter of the Month wins a copy of:

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Congratulations Andrew! Enjoy the best Rockstar game ever made!

CUTTINGS

BROTHERLY LOVE

Does Angry Sackboy have any siblings?
Blake Hepworth,
via Facebook

Yes.

COMING FROM AMERICA

I wish the US PS mag had a Facebook page like this, you guys just tipped the awesome bar! I wish to go to your beaches one day and get wet down under!

Swamy René Aguilar,
via Facebook

Thanks mate!
You should see the magazine – it's even better!

RED DEAD HEAD

My PS3 is my huckleberry.
Matty McLaren,
via Facebook

Then we've got two guns. One for each of ya.



➤ This will cost you. Again

2K IS OK

I would like to congratulate 2K for using some smarts and thinking outside the box. I believe the customer benefits by having the download pack contained within the *BioShock 2* game disc and allowing customers to, in essence, purchase a key to access the additional content (albeit a bit on expensive on this occasion).

One benefit for the customer is that it's time efficient as they only have to suspend 'saving the world' for seconds to download the key as opposed to five to 10 minutes for a typical expansion download. I know what I would rather spend time doing. An additional

benefit is that it's more economical for the user who can purchase the key anytime they choose and don't have to waste precious megabytes from their monthly plan. As some expansions can be between one to two gigabytes this may actually prevent someone getting their long awaited pack until their next monthly cycle.

I can appreciate Adam Mathew's point of view (from pg. 26, issue #43 May) in that having locked content on a disc is like purchasing a house with a locked room. However, I like to view it as paying the cover charge to get into a strip club where, sure, you can have a good time – but to get the full gyrating experience your going to have to fork out more dollars once your in there to unlock the lap dance.

Michael Clark, QLD

That's admirably diplomatic of you there, Michael. You're obviously more than entitled to your opinion, but we still don't agree. We still feel that's a bit of a farce selling gamers access to content they've already been given. We're happy to download and pay for new content, whether they're music tracks, cars or map packs, until we're blue in the face. You can't deny you're trading money for something you didn't own before, in those cases. But if you're putting something on the disc, it ought to be in the game from the get go.

SPEAK TO US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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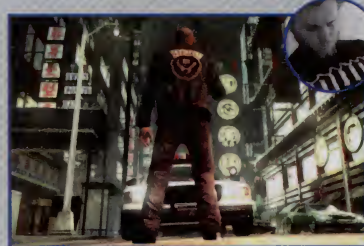
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STOREFRONT

We play the games so you can pick the cream from the crock. What deliciousness have you bought lately?



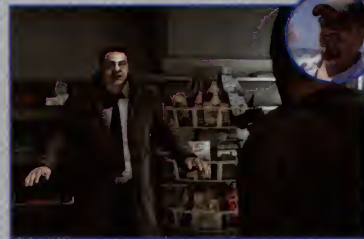
Timmy Scareshow
GTA: Episodes from LC

"Ever been part of a biker gang? Yeah me neither. Thought I'd enjoy it. Did."



Jamie Ross
Just Cause 2

"Downloaded the demo and was blown away so I immediately went out and bought the game."



Andrew Threlfall
Heavy Rain

"Played the demo and was sucked into the story instantly! Not a revolution but epic story telling on a medium where story usually gets ignored!"



Andrew Maddock
GOW Collection

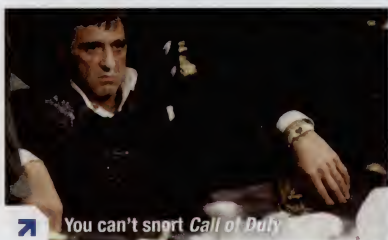
"Great to reminisce and also be rewarded with trophies!"

CAPTION THIS!

We have the screen, and all your captions are belong to us. Well, one, anyway. **Daryl Andrew Noack** takes it out *again*, making it two in a row. Check out Facebook on Fridays for your chance to win!



"C'mon Nate, first the hotel corridor, now here?!"



ADDICTED TO LOVE

Hey guys, lovin' the mag.

Just want to hear your opinion on something. Recently 'gaming addiction' has become a big subject in our industry and there has been some cases on the news.

There's this one guy who just got up in the morning, played and only stopped for toilet breaks. His ex said that she just couldn't put up with him and his mates playing games all night and yelling 'woot!' every time that they levelled up.

There is a guy worse off, though, as he stopped hanging out with his mates to fit in more gaming time. He wasn't lucky enough to have mates that enjoy games as well.

I think that people are overreacting to this a bit. A news reporter treated this like a disease when he said if you think you have problems, 'see your GP and they'll point you in the right direction'.

You guys said in the May issue that 'MMORPGs are the biggest offenders, so fear not. Go back to your PS3s people'. In the report that I watched, the guy who got dumped was actually addicted to the PS3.

Any idea what the worst game is and what you think of this 'epidemic'.

Ryan V, via email

In the UK, the *Lancashire Evening Post* recently ran a typically over-the-top story about how 'terrifying' it was that children everywhere are playing too many videogames. "Spending two hours on a game station is equivalent to taking a line of cocaine in the high it produces," said counselor and therapist Steve Pope.

We're going to go out on a limb here and say Steve Pope has never played a "gamestation" OR used cocaine. We've been known to play a few videogames here at OPS, and none of them have ever made us feel like we've just snorted coke.

People are overreacting. But this is typical. If you're a parent and your kids are addicted to videogames, you're a terrible parent. Fix it. If you're an adult, talk to somebody. Any addiction, drugs, gambling or 'gaming', can be addressed with effort.

RINSE REPEAT

Firstly I'd like to state that this is actually a thankyou letter. It's a thankyou letter from a gamer to the entire gaming community!

I'll set the scene. Christmas morning I awake to open *Tekken 6*, a glorious present given by an awesome girlfriend (SCORE!).

Immediately the PS3 fires up and the next second bang, pow and loads of swearing. It breaks. My release day PS3 destroyed, my day ruined. Boxing Day I run to the local gaming store upon opening minute I have purchased a brand new slimline PS3. Bling as.

Now the seeming arduous task of replaying, finishing and earning all my hard won Trophies and achievements from the past. It has been the greatest few months of my life and I have you to thank. The great developers, the great designers, the graphics sound and animation departments from every game maker who has put effort into the PS3 since conception to bring me the greatest titles such as *Killzone 2*, *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*, *God of War III* and *God of War Collection*, *Tekken 6*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, all these games and many more deserve the respect of multiple plays through and I'd like to thank Sony for all the achievements and great gaming feats brought on by the revolution of PS3.

And by far I'd like to thank the reviewers at OPS for their tireless work in helping me decide which of the plethora of fantastic titles I should spend my hard earned cash on.

Finally anyone reading this, the gaming industry is growing so fast, without the support of the fans who love these titles and many more, the industry would not be able to create such gems of games to satisfy the hardcore gamers and casual gamers needs alike, and I urge any of you to really replay those great titles. It's not all about online content, sure its great but why not replay that whole tale of your favourite character without skipping the cutscenes for the action, it will definitely make worth your while.

Robert Nugent, via email

Cheers for the props Robert. You do bring up a good point. Between us here there are dozens and dozens of great games we've never parted with because we always thought we'd play them again, but never have. Maybe we should find the time.

TOP OF THE PROPS

Hi OPS, I love your mag, it's great, my favourite magazine, so great that I've decided to dedicate this entire e-mail to list why.

Humour: sure, other magazines are just as professional as you are but fail to be as funny as you guys. Bonuses: 100% Aussie content, previews ONLY here this side of the equator, and finally: the reviews: awesome! Plus you don't use the whole %/decimal system. I mean I don't give two shits about whether *Just Cause 2* got 9.2 or 9.3. Anyway, I'd like to wrap this up by saying thank you, thanks for all the good times I've had reading your mag and for always keeping it fresh.

Saed Batshon, via email

We glad you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we enjoy putting it together, page by page. It might be easier for some to put together a magazine using mostly British content, but Australian PlayStation owners do deserve a completely local magazine. And that's us.

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INCOMING



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 2010 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION | **DEVELOPER:** TREYARCH | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

Holy Foxtrot Uniform Charlie Kilo

Activision and Treyarch must find themselves in a tricky spot: just how will we craft a follow-up to history's most successful entertainment launch? The *Modern Warfare* label belongs squarely to Infinity Ward, and it's hard to bet gamers would definitely lap up another World War II title, no matter how much money that era has generated in the past or its tone.

Speculation was rife that Vietnam would be the next battleground. Fans wishes have come true, though the game isn't set *exclusively* in one of the most culturally significant wars of the last generation. Never before has there been a conflict that's generated such a massive number of songs, movies and books.

Black Ops, however, isn't a history lesson. It's about telling a story and, to borrow the words of Treyarch's studio head Mark Lamia, crafting an entertainment experience on an epic scale. It helps if there's some mystery involved, and part of that mystery's in the title. 'Black Ops' refers to soldiers who are undercover, fighting wars for the CIA that officially never

existed, and were totally deniable, during the Cold War period. Their exploits will take you all over the world and through time. Although it's set in the past it'll give you the chance to get to grips with equipment you've never seen before in a videogame.

For the first time in Treyarch's history of developing *Call of Duty*, the team has devoted all its resources into making the game. In the past, Treyarch has had its attention split across other titles: when *World at War* was being made, it was also working on *Spiderman: Web of Shadows* and the Bond adventure *Quantum of Solace*. Things are different now.

This latest *Call of Duty* isn't afraid to experiment. Treyarch showed us a couple of levels, beginning with one titled WMD. It begins as you walk towards and strap yourself into an SR-71, the Blackbird, a supersonic jet that flew high above the Earth's surface. You even have to put on a spacesuit before trundling it down a runway and launching it into the stratosphere.

From 80,000 feet above, we could see our troops on the ground through an infra



➤ That door was red. We wanted it black

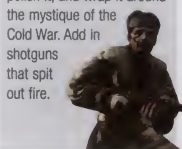
red camera, hiding in some bushes from an approaching convoy. The pilot (that's you) had to scan the road, providing intel to the ground troops.

Perspective cuts to a soldier hiding in the snowy bushes, his heart pounding, crossbow loaded. The team has to infiltrate a sub-station behind enemy lines in the Soviet Union, getting in as quietly as possible and eliminating any threats along the way. Crossbows drawn, they sneak down as far as they can before having to rappell the rest of the way. This rappelling section is performed by smoothly charging and releasing the **L2** and **R2** shoulder buttons. Once down as far as they can go, the team have to bust through a huge window, feet first, guns out.

From here it's bedlam, and lot more bloody compared to other *Call of Duty* titles. As the soldier penetrated the glass and surprised the troops on the other side, time slows down, a bit like *MW2*'s 'breach and clear' missions. Once the substation's been disabled we're back outside, continuing further down the hills,

THE PITCH

Take the cinematic approach of *World at War*, polish it, and wrap it around the mystique of the Cold War. Add in shotguns that spit out fire.





36
BULLETSTORM
The forecast is in – it's raining lead!



37
KILLZONE 3
First details and exclusive screens for the sexiest of shooters!



40
LBP2
About your next fun inside the best playground in gaming!



44
HUNTED: THE DEMON'S FORGE
Co-op fantasy hack and slash!



William Tell – or William Hell? What's that? 'Tell' is it? Okay

Angry, angry young whirly-bird



MULTIPLAYER ANYONE?

Arguably, the biggest component of the previous CoD is its multiplayer, and even the Treyarch-developed *World At War* has some extremely entertaining multiplayer modes.

Treyarch, however, wasn't willing to show us any multiplayer footage but did confirm *Black Ops* will support co-op, two players locally splitscreen and up to four players online. This little nugget of info has us licking our lips – few shooters make the effort to offer the quad squad.



Audio cue: *I Believe I Can Fly* – R. Kelly

legends, and there are plenty of stories that can be told in the '60s timeframe though the scope of the game goes beyond that. The team won't say just how far as its progression is key to the gameplay. When we pressed them on specific conflicts, in particular the Bay of Pigs battle, we were met with a surprised, 'How did you know about that?' which was quickly retracted into, 'We can neither confirm nor deny'.

Regardless of what you will or won't see, this is as well researched game as EA's golden child, though the two are going down very different paths. This is a shooter, seen through a first-person view but with a third-person

narrative structure, giving the perspective of the story from various angles. There's even going to be a change in the art direction as the game progresses.

Treyarch has spoken to both elite US and then-Soviet soldiers about their missions, definitely incorporating what they've learnt into *Black Ops*. It's bound to make the game much more authentic than relying on secondary sources and heresay, and we wonder if they've done enough to win the hearts and wallets of gamers with one eye on *Medal of Honor*.

Whatever the result, 2010 is following last year as being a damn good year for shooters. That you can be sure of. **Paul Taylor**



"Unity, turds. That is the key word in 'unit'. Without the 'y'"

crossbows ready. However, we're packing modified ammo: an explosive tip.

It's plausible that this grenade-on-a-bolt is what WMD refers to, as it also sticks to whatever it's fired into; enemies included. There's a few seconds between the bolt connecting with its target and the explosion, and we're not sure whether it's comical or diabolical to see troops cartwheeling skyward when the tip goes off.

The next mission was called Slaughterhouse, set in Vietnam, and was far different in scope than WMD. Your character goes in hot, flailing through the air as the chopper he's riding on is shot down. Landing hard inside an old hotel you're given a shotgun with modified ammo called Dragon's Breath. Blasting off one of these shells engulfs your unfortunate target in flames, blundering across the black comedy line. It's all-out action, civilians avoiding being getting caught in the crossfire as the ground troops watch the city of Hu burn while they hunt for a Soviet General.

The game is bathed in history, rumours and

THEY SAY

"Dedicated multiplayer, single-player and co-op teams [will create] the most intense and riveting experience possible."

WE SAY

It talks a good game, and we're totally intrigued by the storyline that spans over a decade or more. We always applaud local splitscreen multiplayer too.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
				✗	



INCOMING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SHOOTER | EXPECTED RELEASE: 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: O2A/BETHESDA | DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE | PLAYERS: TBC

RAGE

It's very, very, very, very, ridiculously good looking...

There's been a lot of talk about *RAGE*, from the title's misrepresentation in early looks by EA, to obvious comparisons to *Borderlands*.

After seeing this testament to all that is iD, and all that that implies, we found common words inadequate. This ain't no regular shooter. We overheard another developer's reaction to it at Bethesda Days in Paris (who shall remain nameless), and can only invoke a *Battlestar Galactica*-esque rendition of his comments to do them justice. "Is that *RAGE*? Frak! Get frakked! Are you frakking kidding me? FRAK! Is that on PC or console? CONSOLE? Frak me!! FRRRAAAAAKKKK!!!!" You get the idea, right?

It is an ocular assault; an orgy for your eyeballs, an iris-smashing delight. Something alcoholic gamers might recall as "a moment of sumptuous clarity". It is the dog's bollocks, the duck's nuts, the bee's knees. How else would one describe it?

Remember when you got your 1080p TV of awesome and whacked your first DVD in, and thought damn, that looks unreal? Then you threw in a Blu-ray and rubbed your eyes in disbelief? That's *RAGE* in a nutshell, and every other title is just a plain old DVD.

RAGE is an interesting manner of beast, gleaming bits and pieces from many industry leading title/franchises and coalescing them

into one cohesive, jaw-droppingly, pant-wettingly gorgeous environment. The first thing you'll notice, as we stated, is the drool worthy graphics. Utilising the brand new iD Tech 5 Engine, it textures the entire world, and it shows. With a draw distance of apparently several thousand kilometres, every single detail is lusciously and vividly clear.

From the dusky Texan-styled mountain ranges and outcrops, to the sparks of electricity from your crossbow, to the gears and pistons pumping up and down on your vehicle – *RAGE* is a sight to behold. *Crysis 2* is currently wowing the press around the world, but *RAGE* is nothing short of incredible. We've said our peace on how this thing looks.

The story is part *Fallout* crossed with a bit of *Mad Max 2* (or *The Road Warrior* to our Yank subscribers) thrown in, covered with a generous dollop of Western mythos. Pre-apocalypse, many humans were cryogenically frozen in stasis in Arks (sound familiar?) to be opened once the fallout cleared, and to ensure our way of life didn't go the way of the dodo bird.

A slight malfunction leads to the entire Ark, bar yourself, being wiped out, and after waking in a desert shack and being helped by a crazy old stranger, you come to understand a shadow security force is now after you for undisclosed reasons, as well as bored bunch of mutated crazy bandits, just for shits n' giggles. It's time to ditch your "Hey look at me, I'm Buck Rogers" threads and ease on down to the town of Wellspring.

Obvious similarities between Joss Whedon's *Firefly* and *Serenity* became immediately

“It is an ocular assault; an orgy for your eyeballs, an iris smashing delight”



"I'm the guy who keeps Mr. Dead in his pocket"

SERENITY NOW!

In the first town visited, Wellspring, the mash up of Eastern and Western culture harkened back to one of *OPS*' favourite flicks/series, *Firefly/Serenity*. The Western influences are immediately apparent, just check out the backgrounds, the dusty saloons you frequent, and the "stranger with no name" trappings our hero has. Eastern touches are a tad subtler, from the pointed helmets security officers wear of Chinese origin, to the martial arts prowess shown by the various gangs to go toe-to-toe with – though the most obvious similarity is the hauntingly poignant score.



INCOMING

Scanning for mutations. Three boobs detected. Awesome



A quick before and after



Mutants do situps, apparently

We bags the last V8 interceptor



apparent (see 'Serenity Now!'), with the visuals accompanied by one of the most understatedly apt scores we've heard in quite some time. The dulcet tones serenade you as you await the scratchy slide of guitar strings followed by the definitive twang. It pulls you right into the moment and holds you there as it seductively whispers to you in the background. But we digress. Again.

After dispatching a few crazy-ass bandits with a beefy six-shooter and a few decapitations via *Krull* inspired glaive (EVERY game should have one), you take a conveniently parked, steroid-infused ride into town. This was the first taste of vehicular combat, and we liked it.

The feel is extremely arcade styled, almost *Burnout 3*, with enemies evaded and shunted out the way with machine gun fire. Cue explosions as this dune buggy from hell fanged it around corners with a wee tap tap taperoo of boost to straighten out. She handles like a dream, and our guide, Creative Lead Tim Willits, explained the ins and outs of the upgradeable vehicles. There are racetracks located all over where you can win tickets to upgrade at various auto-shops in the *RAGE* universe, giving your vehicle unique attributes and a distinct look. Each gang you battle also has its own tone, with some being your more traditional buggies, and others looking more like souped-up muscle cars on crack.

In fact, this is pretty much reinforced in every aspect of the game. It's like an RPG without the level grind. Want to focus on your

car and knock out every race in the world? You go for it – but if that doesn't float your boat, you won't have to slug through it either. The same goes for your weaponry. Rather than have your character level up with specific attributes, you do it via upgrades to your arsenal or perks to your ammunition. Varied sights or electric infused bullets/arrows can drastically change the nature of combat. Here's a hint: anything electric helps make boiled mutant soup in the sewer sections, and we giggled with glee each time one of them suckers fried.

“We could drone on for hours about this, it's simply that good”

But wait, there's more! You've got a limitless inventory for all hoarders who want to keep every single solitary thing they find, and even remote controlled car bombs for the explosive kid in us all, plus several types of deployable turrets. Our favourite is easily the spider turret, which actually goes on a search and destroy mission to anyone unluckily enough to find his or her way in your path.

We could drone on for hours about this, it's simply that good, and for a first look, it's beyond astounding. We wait with clammy hands and fevered brows for the next glance at *RAGE*. Avert your eyes children, it's like looking directly at the sun, you may burn your retinas if you hold its gaze for too long. **Dave Kozicki**

THE PITCH

A fish out of water tale set in a sexified post-apocalyptic world populated by mutants, muscle cars, outlanders and time-frozen heroes.



THEY SAY

"We've built everything on a really in-depth story to engage players and get them into the *RAGE* universe"

WE SAY

It's out of time, out of this world, outta sight! Eye candy only gets you so far, but *RAGE* looks like that's just the tip of the iceberg. A shining star of next year.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
				✗	

INCOMING



WHIP IT GOOD

Along with firearms, Grayson has an energy whip that can reel enemies in closer, or it can be upgraded to kill in amusing ways. You also have a kick and a ground slide that can send foes airborne. Each of these actions activates a bit of bullet-time for making more precise kills.

"Dude, Poison Ivy has *really* let herself go"

God bless you, ragdoll physics



Shoot him again. He's gagging for it



Now that's a cool 'whwip'



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SHOOTER | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: EA | **DEVELOPER:** PEOPLE CAN FLY | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

BULLETSTORM

The brains of the slain fall mainly on the plain

For those of you just tuning in; the forecast is most certainly in – and it isn't sunshine and lollipops. Along with some isolated explosions, our experts predict a 101 percent chance of a hail of bullets being concentrated at your face, with only a one percent chance of you surviving without some speed holes. And we remind you our computers are operating on a one percent margin of error.

Bulletstorm is the brainchild of Epic and People Can Fly (developer of the criminally underplayed *Painkiller*) and it favours creative slaughtering over careful marksmanship. As the name of the squall suggests, *Bulletstorm* requires you to become a one-man cyclone of death that deals out 'gunishment' to cannibalistic mutants, all the while racking up combos that encourage variety over just spamming headshots.

You're snapping into the boots of Grayson Hunt, an ex-soldier who was originally part of an intergalactic peace keeping force called Dead Echo. When Grayson and his Dead Echo compatriot, Ishi Sato, discover that they had been working on the wrong side, they betray their squad commander and end up being exiled to the edges of the galaxy.

A few years later, Grayson has become a drunken space pirate and, during one of his various space-based shenanigans, he crash

lands on the planet Stygia – a failed utopia that has gone dark for a few hundred years.

By chance Grayson meets up with Sato again and, surrounded by hordes of mutants and flesh-eating gangs, the two of them decide to work together to get off the planet alive and take revenge on the man who ruined their lives in the first place.

Sounds like quite a tempting tempest, no?

The bullet-based precipitation in *Bulletstorm* is set to be something we've never encountered before in a shooter. All of the guns you acquire can be upgraded using points accrued from the aforementioned 'skillshot' system. Slaughter stylishly and you can supercharge a stock-standard machine gun into a force of nature that can unload 100 bullets in a single shot.

As your bullet storm reaches the highest point of its fury you can expect to stumble across a 'flail gun'. This happy, yet sadistic little chap fires out two timed-grenades linked together by a chain. As if your evil mind hasn't already connect the dots – the general idea is to use them to ensnare multiple enemies and to create a large, localised meat shower.

At the risk of repeating ourselves, *Bulletstorm* is well deserved of its severe weather warning. There's a reason this game is making rumbles this far out from release, and

the involvement of acclaimed *Gears of War* creator Epic Games is just one of them.

Inebriated space pirates? Mutant cannibals armed to the teeth? Plants that want to make a salad out of you? Make no mistake, people, we could be staring into the maw of the perfect storm. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"Utilise a large arsenal of combat moves and large guns to prove you have the minerals to eliminate animals and vegetables."

WE SAY

If People Can Fly can manage to nail the right consistency of substance to style this could rock pretty hard. We await more details, particularly regarding multiplayer.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
			✗		

THE PITCH

An Unreal-powered, space-based shooter that rewards skilfully linked, stylish sadism. This is old-school shooting from the hip, just how we like it.





You can't kill The Metal – or this guy, we're betting

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** MUSIC | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA | **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION | **DEVELOPER:** NEVERSOFT | **PLAYERS:** 1-4

GUITAR HERO 6

Greatest rock game in the world – or just a tribute?

THE PITCH

Rock-focused *Guitar Hero* fret melting plus a wacky *Brütal Legend*-esque story mode.



Guitar Hero 6 wasn't the most secret of announcements. Along with *Guitar Hero* games being as predictable and seasonal as the flight patterns of ducks, Kiss frontman Gene Simmons had already outed the existence of the project thanks to his very loose, freakishly long tongue. Yes, the guitar game that started it all is back like clockwork – but has it learned some new licks, or is it just milking the same old riff?

Activision gets off to a flying (V) start by coming to its senses and returning to the series' rock roots. No longer will the music selection be a trainwreck orgy of 'music for everybody'.

This outing is so utterly infused with rock, it now has a story-driven quest mode that lends cred to Tim Schafer's claims Activision gave up on *Brütal Legend* when it couldn't figure out how to turn it into a *Guitar Hero* game.

THEY SAY

By they, we mean Gene Simmons, and all he's said is "I'm the voice of *Guitar Hero 6*." That's it

WE SAY

Verily, it is too early to raise our goblet of rock for this one. A rhythm game lives or dies on its setlist and we haven't seen enough of that to pass judgement.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
	✗				

Essentially, the existing characters (Axel Steel, Johnny Napalm, Lars Ümläut, etc) all return and shall make a metamorphosis from 'rock stars' into 'rock warriors'. This means massive muscles, demon horns and other bizarre physical alterations that lend themselves to an overall increase in gnarliness.

During the Party Play mode (ala *GH5*) we got a short taste-test of the track selection in this sequel, including Tesla's 'Modern Day Cowboy', Black Sabbath's 'Children of the Grave', AFI's 'Dancing Through Sundry', Muse's 'Uprising' and Rammstein's 'Waidmanns Heil'.

It's still very early days yet, so we'll wait until we heard more tunes. **Adam Mathew**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SHOOTER | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY | **DEVELOPER:** GUERRILLA GAMES | **PLAYERS:** TBA

KILLZONE 3

Killing in the zone of...

Sony must have something epic up its sleeve because, mere moments before our final deadline, it's gone and officially announced *Killzone 3*. Three weeks before E3.

If this is the stuff Sony is making public now, we're positively rigid with excitement about what we assume it's keeping secret.

Of course, we've known of *Killzone 3*'s existence for a few months. However, we knew nothing aside from the fact that it was simply gestating away behind-closed-doors in Amsterdam. All that has changed.

Killzone 3 will pick up right where *Killzone 2* left off. With Visari a corpse, a power vacuum on Helghan now sees figures like Stahl, the head of the Helghan weapon producers, vying for power. Essentially, the surviving ISA soldiers are caught in the middle of the turmoil. They want off the planet to return home to Vecta but, outnumbered and outgunned, fate has different plans.

Killzone 2 was no slouch in any department and was more than up to the task of demonstrating just how good a PS3 game could look. Guerrilla, however, is aiming to blow it out of the water. The average footprint of a level in *Killzone 3* will be around 10 times the average size of a typical *Killzone 2* level. Better still, according to the developers, there's more

destruction in the first three minutes of *Killzone 3* than there was in one level of *Killzone 2*.

Killzone 3 will feature suitably insane, and massive, new weapons – plus jetpacks. You may remember the jetpack troopers from *Killzone Liberation* on PSP. They're back and you can use the jetpacks yourself.

Members of Sony's crack squad of coders from Naughty Dog, The ICE Team, are assisting Guerrilla getting things just right. But the biggest revelation is that *Killzone 3* will be playable in full stereoscopic 3D, making the PS3 the system of choice for true tech heads. Whether or not 3D gaming is the path of the future remains to be seen but, like Ubisoft with *Avatar*, Sony clearly wants in on the ground floor.

More as we get it, naturally. **Luke Reilly**



"I see red, I see red, I see reed"

THE PITCH

Killzone 2: supersized and cranked up to 11.



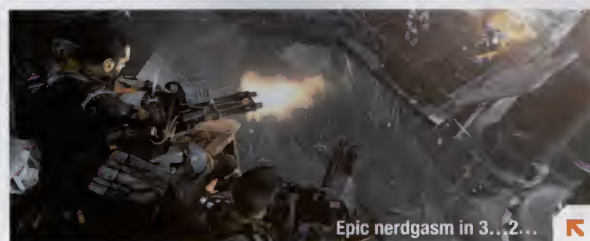
THEY SAY

"This is David vs. Goliath... if Goliath had thousands of troops and a thermonuclear arsenal"

WE SAY

Bring it on. We'll take on the Helghans any day of the week – even Goliath-like Helghans. We expect E3 will provide an absolute lion's share of information on this one.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
					✗



Epic nerdgasm in 3...2...



INFORMING

➤ We hope Buzz Lightyear doesn't drive stick



➤ Playing with Woody: don't deny you do it



➤ We have no explanation for this scene. None

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ADVENTURE | EXPECTED RELEASE: JUNE 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE SOFTWARE | PLAYERS: 1

TOY STORY 3

Fun times infinity... and beyond?

THE PITCH

A game that lets you play with cool toys, just like you did with your own when you were a kid



When Disney unleashed *Toy Story* back in 1995, it changed the world of animated films forever. The shift away from hand-drawn animation to whiz-bang CGI was groundbreaking stuff that soon made Pixar the king of its very own county. Merchandising being merchandising, videogame adaptations of the first two *Toy Story* films were inevitably made, but to be perfectly honest, they sucked so hard we still have the hickey marks on our controller thumbs

Avalanche Software (not to be confused with *Just Cause 2* developer Avalanche Studios) is taking great pains to erase the sins of the past with *Toy Story 3*. Keeping in line with the pioneering nature of the *Toy Story* films, this movie-licensed game has been announced with mini-games that support *PlayStation Move*. Technically, you can buy this game and have a *PlayStation Move* enabled title months before the peripheral even hits stores. Man, your friends are going to be so jealous – and mildly confused – when you brag about it.

Whatever the case, *Move* support isn't *Toy Story 3*'s trump card. The big deal here is Toy Box mode; where you can plop down any items you wish and essentially create a toy ecosystem. It's an utterly freeform sandbox experience that lets you do whatever you want, whenever you want.

Obviously, missions are scattered throughout the world too, giving you a chance to talk to iconic *Toy Story* characters like Slinky, Stinky Pete and other familiar faces. In one mission you might find yourself lassoing stray cattle and hurling them back into their pen. Next you might get the sudden urge to kidnap toy townspeople and chuck them into a barbershop to give them reverse mohawks. From there, you may even opt to just go walkabout in an effort to explore and scoop up the myriad of collectible items sprinkled throughout your very own toy town.

Along with an overall increase in player freedom, *Toy Story 3* also sports PS3 exclusive content in the form of missions that let you play as Emperor Zurg himself. For those of you out of the loop, Zurg is the sworn nemesis of Buzz Lightyear and though he is only six-inches tall, he is on a never-ending quest to enslave the universe. The wheel-based Zurg is mischievous and fast, and with his arm cannon, he's great at blasting things to earn you a swag full of in-game currency. Plus, Zurg has a certain, indefinable charm to him.

Avalanche and Disney may be onto something good here. PlayStation fans are in store for a unique experience, thanks to *Toy Story 3*'s exclusive PS3 content, *PlayStation Move* mini-games and a toy world that can be tailored to suit any imagination out there. But is there too much freedom here at the expense of mission structure and design discipline? Don't kids need structure and discipline too? Well, when it comes to playing, having stupid amounts of fun and issuing reverse mohawks, the answer is: hell no. **Adam Mathew**



BOYS AND THEIR TOYS

After much infighting, none of us here at *OPS* could decide on what was the greatest toy ever. Mouse Trap, Matchbox cars and Thunderpunch He-Man were what we came up with, and none of us were prepared to budge. We threw the question out on our Facebook page for some help. Here's what you had to say.

James Rossiter

G.I. Joes. Come on, everyone at one point has spent a few hours battling the evil of their imagination through these sexless, overly buff, super soldiers.

Mark N Julie Blackman

LEGO: I mean, c'mon, how many different things could you make with a box of LEGO?

Daniel McKeating

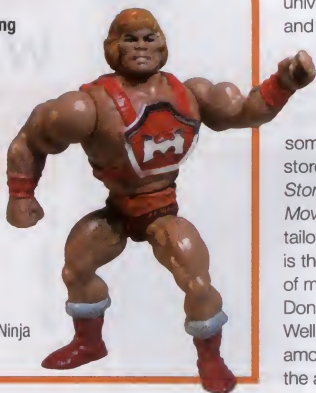
Hot Wheels

Alana Brennan

Metal Tonka trucks with edges so sharp they could take your eye out just by looking at them.

Stuile Steele

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.



THEY SAY

"By combining the power of imagination with the *Toy Story* universe, this game appeals to the joy of play in all of us."

WE SAY

As long as there is a decent amount of toys and playsets – and a hilarious physics system – we'll totally make our own fun. Looks like a hoot.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
			⊗		

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RACING | EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL | PLAYERS: 1-16

GRAN TURISMO 5

One 'ring to rule them all



The ripple strip is also reflected on the painted side of the mirror

THE PITCH

1000 cars. One game. Will move millions. How much more do you need to know?



Details on *Gran Turismo 5* have been as rare as rocking-horse shit for a few months now – but fresh titbits are beginning to fall away from the sure-to-be-tasty flesh of Sony's system-seller.

No doubt this has something to do with the fact it's about to hit E3 with all the force of a runaway houseboat. We'll be able to fill you in on everything revealed at E3 next issue, but for now you'll need to make do with these tasty morsels.

Gaming business news site MCV is claiming to have received information from a source close to Sony that *GT5*'s delay is due to the implementation of 3D technology and support for the new PlayStation Move controller. 3D support has already been confirmed, but the PS Move whispers are interesting. We're not convinced *Gran Turismo* fans would be too chuffed if it came to light *GT5* was being held up to shoehorn in support for an invisible steering wheel – but we'll save any editorialising on that matter when we have more hard facts.

According to *Auto Express*, a "secret" *GT5* demo was on show at the recent Nürburgring 24-hour race. This demo featured Kazunori Yamauchi's race-spec Lexus IS-F he used in the event itself, and features the full Nürburgring 24 Hours circuit – which uses the Grand Prix circuit AND the full Nordschleife section – for the first time in a videogame. Better yet, they saw the Green Hell at night.

New features of the game allegedly include a tyre grip penalty which temporarily reduces grip if you go off the track and onto the grass or into the gravel. It takes around three to four corners to clear the crud from your rubber and retain full grip again.



Trailer trash?

GT5 will arrive sometime between now and Armageddon. We expect a firm release date from E3 this year. Then again, we had a firm date from Tokyo Game Show last year.

Luke Reilly

THEY SAY

"*Gran Turismo 5* will give you even more of the astounding realism, design and in-car physics that the series has won acclaim for"

WE SAY

When this game is released it's going to melt minds and move millions of PS3s. You can put the ranch on that. The key word here, however, is 'when'. We're still waiting.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
					X

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: OCTOBER | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL | PLAYERS: 1-TBA

ASSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD

Choice, bro

Confession time. We shunned instructions on how to play the multiplayer component of *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* at the hands-on event in LA, ever confident that we'd pick it up instantly. As you'd expect, we got completely murdered at it.

Forget storyline or the reason why you're in this world; deathmatch is all about getting the other guy before he gets you. We played an eight-man match set in an ancient Italian city, as we ran around with knives hidden up our sleeves. After our target was confirmed we'd have to hunt our victim down using the rudimentary compass system before they got

wind of who was on their tail. Of course, they had a target to eliminate themselves, whilst weaving between the city of people going about their business.

You're able to foil your would-be assassin by tripping them over, embarrassing them, and running away. Doing so earns you points as does nailing your target. As well as sharp pointy objects, you're also blessed with a system of 'perks': invisibility, faster running, better disguises and so on, though the amount of

THE PITCH

Assassin's Creed II, online, with your mates, running around stabbing each other. Much more entertaining than being stabbed outside the pub at 3am in the middle of who-knows-where.



He's Ezio (like Sunday morn'g)



Yes, but can you shoot the horse and skin it? Can you!?

these that you can use at any one time is limited.

The code we played hadn't been totally optimised – to be expected, as the game isn't out for some months yet – so there were times when our character keeled over without us seeing who'd knocked us off.

The *Assassin's Creed* series has quickly become quite the gaming phenomenon, so a multiplayer spin-off is no surprise. Still, it showed a lot of promise. With a decent perks system, this makes multiplayer combat that much more personal. Paul Taylor

THEY SAY

"Players can choose from a wide range of characters, each with their own signature weapons and assassination techniques"

WE SAY

On a pure gameplay level, this felt like a decent knockabout in the *Assassin's Creed* universe. There'll be a single-player component too, don't worry.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
		X			

INCOMING



INFO

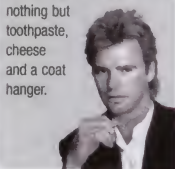
FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** PLATFORM | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | **DEVELOPER:** MEDIA MOLECULE | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

Welcome to the world's biggest blank canvas

THE PITCH

It's *LittleBigPlanet* meets MacGyver, creating something awesome out of nothing but toothpaste, cheese and a coat hanger.



While there's no doubt that 2008's *LittleBigPlanet* was – is, rather – a stupendous gaming achievement, what's even more amazing is the amount and quality of custom levels made by the *LBP* community on the PSN. Homages to games of your youth are mixed in with incredible contraptions (*LBP* calculator, anyone?) as well as some strong narrative-driven levels backing up the main game. It's less of a toy box and more of a toolset, hidden within marketable charm.

LBP2 won't just continue that manifesto; it threatens to be the game that makes every other title in your collection irrelevant.

It's all because of the revamped level editor. While *LBP* allowed for Galaga-inspired levels with fully working ships that shot exploding baddies, the mechanics were purely driven by

the game. Switches, triggers and levers all had to be used by Sackboy in order for contraptions to work, and the placement of switches and so on in the level took up physical space, meaning sacrifices to the level design. Now, however, those logic controls are mapped to the controller.

Build a car, map accelerate to or or whatever you please. Put a horn on it and map that to whatever button you like, though you can now record your own sound as well rather than relying on the sound bank of wacky noises. Make a fighting game complete with health bars, or a shoot 'em up that won't require the working parts to be hidden behind smoke and mirrors. Media Molecule's even fabricated a real-time strategy clone using the tools in *LBP2*. Are you getting excited yet?

Enemy AI and NPCs have also been seriously upgraded. The new 'sackbots' are more than cutouts on wheels with a weak spot, and can be programmed to behave in certain ways with definite actions. If you want to make your sackbots run around waving their arms, you can, or have them behave in a particular manner only when your sack approaches them.

Camera control is more flexible, and creating your own cutscenes is now possible. Toss in a few changing camera angles, make your cast do whatever you want them to and record your very own voiceovers.

Single player hasn't been neglected, as sackboy has a brand new toy: a grappling hook that can be used on the environment and other sackpersons. Plus, all the DLC and created levels from *LBP* will be totally transferable into *LBP2* – a smart move, and makes the series a platform in itself rather than a bare-bones sequel that needs to re-hash and re-sell previous content. We're looking forward to losing ourselves all over again. **Paul Taylor**



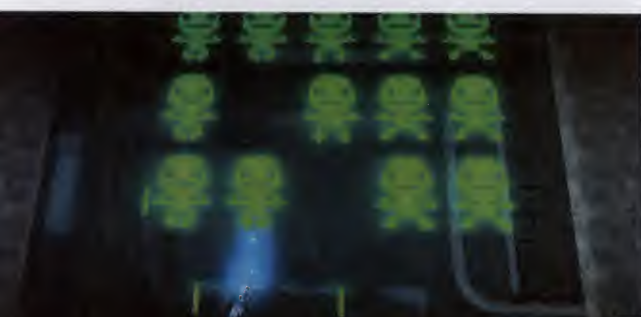
THEY SAY

"Your creations can behave exactly the way you want them to, or you can just wire up all the controls to various burping noises"

WE SAY

The potential here to make stuff is hard to comprehend. It's really re-inventing what the phrase user-created content actually means and allows.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
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Sack Invaders: home-made game, or an STD we'd rather avoid?

This dance party needs way more cowbell





Computer servers or stove tops? You decide

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RPG | EXPECTED RELEASE: 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA | DEVELOPER: OBSIDIAN | PLAYERS: 1

ALPHA PROTOCOL

Goldfinger or a turdy member?

THE PITCH

Take a dash of Jason Bourne and a lot of *Dragon Age: Origins*. Minus the dragons. And the age.



Spies are cool. Proof: James Bond is cool, Jason Bourne is cool. Mike Thornton, the main man in Obsidian's third-person spy RPG has potential to be ice, baby. Or a douchebag, or a stone-cold, neck-snapping shadow. He's whatever you want him to be.

After you pick a basic speciality at the start of the game, whether you want to be a solidier, a field agent, and so on, and assign points to your abilities – stealth, safecracking, martial arts

etc – you're away. Working for an organisation that holds its secrets more fiercely than the Colonel holds his 11 secret herbs and spices, your first task is to fly to the Middle East and track down a terrorist responsible for owning a set of missiles that shot down a passenger jet.

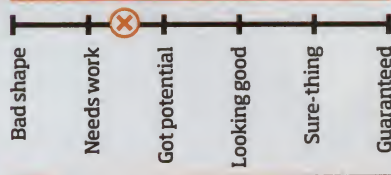
Getting to your man and finding out what happened to the missiles isn't just a matter of storming in guns blazing. How you handle yourself in conversation up to and including

THEY SAY

"[It] unites role-playing, stealth, and action gameplay, crafted with explosive production values of a blockbuster film"

WE SAY

The concept is sound: a third-person action-focused RPG with 100-odd hours of spoken dialogue. It just needs a *much* better main voice actor and more intelligent AI.



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA | DEVELOPER: PLATINUM GAMES | PLAYERS: 1

VANQUISH

It's clobberin' time

Until recently, we knew only three things about *Vanquish*: it features a man dressed in a robotic suit, a destroyed city, and the Russians were involved. After a hands-on and several hundred dollars in the swear jar we know one thing for certain: we're quite impressed.

It takes a hip plot line from the '80s and wraps it up with lush hi-tech weaponry, flashy acrobatics and blazing graphics. Roughly, in the year 20-God-knows-when, the human race is harnessing power from the sun using a big-arse space station. While the US is beaming the new fuel back to Earth, the Russians have taken over the solar dish with an army of robots and are redirecting the beam onto American cities. Right at the start of the game, San Francisco has been toasted and New York is next. This is where you and your team come in: board the space station, destroy the Rusky bots, save the world.

If your eyebrow is raised in scorn, hock that sucker back down. The stage we saw was all action, packed with enough bullets to put three tonnes of lead into Michael Mann's pencil. Your character, Sam Gideon, has a pair of rocket-boots that activate to blast around the stage, before wall-flipping into the air and firing



...because we're seeing sparks

your weapon to fall to the ground in slow-mo while everything else continues in real time – explosions were frequent and pretty. There's even a nifty (if un-PC move) where the leading man flicks a lit cigarette to distract enemies when in cover.

Where does this attitude come from? It's the brain child of *Resident Evil 4* genius Shiji Mikami, and also created in the studio that gave us the luscious *Bayonetta*. Early days, but this looks amazing already. **Paul Taylor**



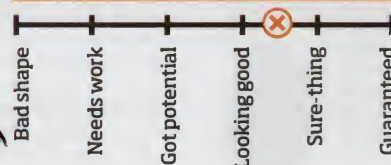
Coldplay's Chris Martin must've put this level together...

THEY SAY

"All the gameplay and staging in *Vanquish* are all put together around the keyword 'intensity'"

WE SAY

They're not wrong. It's damn exciting to watch, and the controls are simple to master (though they need a slight tweak to be less twitchy). Get excited – this looks electric.



THE PITCH

The gutsy action of *Bayonetta* but with guns and robots with some tongue-in-cheek references to clichéd action heroes.



INCOMING

More grind than your average JRPG

Laser tentacles?

Cool screen or drug relapse on your behalf?

You just know this guy spells skate with an 8

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SPORTS | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL | PLAYERS: 1 - TBC

SHAUN WHITE'S SKATEBOARDING

Fear our elite crab-walking skillz

Free spoiler for the über dyslexic among you: global warming isn't the reason why these screenshots don't have snow. Shaun White is boarding via skate this time.

It makes perfect sense too, because while Shaun is 'snow joke' on a mountain, he also happens to be the 'wheel deal' on concrete.

Along with a swag of X Games medals for skateboarding, this titular ginger ninja remains the only skater to successfully land a Body Varial Frontside 540 (also known as 'The Armadillo'). What's that, exactly? Well, in comparative, non-skater terms, it's like successfully licking your own back. In mid-air. So yeah, a little respect for the guy.

Wisely, Ubisoft is side-stepping the EA Skate juggernaut by introducing a new McTwist on the sub-genre. According to creative director, Nick Harper, "skateboarders see the world differently than non-skateboarders." Tapping into that theory, along with a desire to capture the thrill of nailing a trick, Harper and his team at Ubisoft Montreal are hoping to create an experience where your gnarly actions transform the very metropolis around you.

Much like the dramatic use of colour in *The Saboteur*, a suburb in this game will start out as a drab husk of a ghetto. Who is to blame for this bleakness? Nazis? *Skate Nazis*? No,

it seems that a mega corporation known as the Ministry has turned the average Happy Citizen into a mindless 'Eddie Punchclock' who only cares about getting paid. The more tricks you bust out and the bigger combos you unleash the more colour and artistic influence you'll bestow upon the city. Civilians and your fellow skate rats will become more animated, rad music will fill the streets and bitchin', technicolour graffiti will sprout on buildings which will then open up new areas.

If breaking out the crayolas isn't your bag, you can also shape the actual geometry of the world. Find a special colour-designated rail and you can trick and mould its shape in whatever direction you please with your left stick. These plasticine-like objects aren't just limited to rails either; you can command ramps to 'rise from their concrete graves' or even drop them down underground, if you so choose. It's a little kooky to begin with, but it quickly becomes quite an enthralling mechanic that tests not only your mad tricking skills but your imagination and lateral thought processes as well.

Control-wise we're told *Shaun White Skateboarding* uses a right analogue trick system similar to – yet simpler than – the *Skate* series. You have to pre-load a trick by pushing the stick in one of eight directions and then

flick it in the opposite direction to deliver it. The game has a series of modifier buttons to allow you to unleash the eighty odd moves and which trick you do can change depending on the context of your environment. Colour us indigo for intrigued. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"Free people's minds by skating as Shaun White. Colour is your ally and the city is yours to shape as you wish."

WE SAY

Trippy, trippy stuff. Fans of more traditional skateboarding may take issue with this. Personally, we're enthusiastic. At least it doesn't come with a board peripheral

THE PITCH

It's like *Skate*, except you colour the world like *The Saboteur* and you can bend rails to your will, like some sort of ginger Magneto.



Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
		X			



INCOMING

THEY SAY

"MMA will feature the most authentic, intense and broad mixed martial arts experience to date"

WE SAY

It has the content, but it also shows it isn't prepared to be stuck in its ways. This is one of the most malleable online modes we've ever heard of.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
			✗		

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SPORTS | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** LATE 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: EA SPORTS | **DEVELOPER:** EA TIBURON | **PLAYERS:** 1-2

EA SPORTS MMA

Walking the talk

THE PITCH

UFC meets the control scheme of *Fight Night Round 4*, with a wrestling-game's level of smack talk and banter.



The fight is on. *UFC Undisputed 2009* sold stupid numbers and has literally owned that section of the market ever since, with *UFC 2010* launching recently. But the competition is going to get more than a little stiff when *MMA* arrives centre stage.

Taking a lot from the fighting system in *Fight Night Round 4* – flicks, quarter circles and half-circles on the right thumbstick to initiate attacks – *MMA* looks pretty. Animations are slick; transitions from one stance to another just seem to slide together. As well they should, as some of their framework is also built on the

veritable fighter's. The only thing we didn't like the look of was some pre-canned animations of a prone guy's head rocking back in exactly the same way every time his opponent struck him.

That niggle is forgivable, however, when you find out that 50 per cent of the game is in the online component. *MMA* is all about making you famous, and EA is encouraging players to get involved with the community aspect. Make a video touting your prowess in the ring, showing off your skills or your loud mouth. Make it funny and barely relevant if you want, but above all just make it entertaining.

The community can then vote on their favourites, and you could end up in a showcase match. The fight will be 'broadcast' live to viewers' consoles, with commentary provided by two people in a booth rather than relying on the in-game pre-recorded speak. It's a genius concept, and we're wondering why it's taken this long for somebody to make it happen. Hopefully our broadband can handle it.

This is something that could revolutionise the sports genre as a whole, and we expect to see something similar copied over to other titles very soon. **Paul Taylor**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** FLIGHT | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

H.A.W.X. 2

The air up there



THEY SAY

"H.A.W.X. 2 plunges fans into an explosive environment where they can become elite aerial soldiers"

WE SAY

On paper, it sounds like a ripper and perfect fodder for a videogame. Political intrigue, missing nukes, and only you and your chest of expensive toys can make wrongs right.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
		✗			

THE PITCH

The story writing pedigree of Tom Clancy and his universe meets *Ace Combat*.



Ubisoft's 2009 flight sim was mostly forgettable. Competent enough with lots of explosions and things to shoot down, it didn't rely on our imaginations as it felt a bit sterile and the main character wasn't particularly memorable.

For the sequel, exposition shifts away from being just one guy and instead Ubisoft want to give you the keys to the best hardware available. Not just planes, but every aspect of modern air conflict. You'll even take the controls of a UAV as it scours the countryside.

A good Clancy story has oodles of intrigue, espionage and nuclear devices falling into the wrong hands. In this regard, *H.A.W.X. 2* won't disappoint. Insurgent attacks are increasing on military and industrial targets, political instability is rife the world over, and dogs and cats are living together (probably).

Getting to the root of the story means you're going to have to be involved from the ground up – literally. One of the biggest requests the team received was to implement take offs and landings, so you'll be trundling down a runway and then expected to land the beast on an aircraft carrier – the second most difficult thing in the world, right behind thinking of an extremely difficult thing that's safe for us to print in this magazine.

Missing from our demo was the cool ERS, auto-guiding system. Don't worry: we're told it will make a comeback. **Paul Taylor**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: O2A
 BETHESDA | DEVELOPER: INXILE ENTERTAINMENT | PLAYERS: 1-2

HUNTED: THE DEMON'S FORGE

Forge your own path

THE PITCH

Fantasy-infused take on traditional two-player co-op, à la *Army of Two*, with a balance between ranged and melee attacks.



It's been called many things so far; *Army of Two Towers*, *Gears of Warcraft*, and *Everquest: Blood on the Sand* (okay, we're reaching on the last one) so you get the gist of where they're coming from.

inXile Entertainment want to bring back a little *Dungeons & Dragons* to co-op shooters, while giving it its own twist. And you know what? It may be onto something.

Lately almost every title released has some sort of "and co-op" twist to it, yet while most focus on a modern day or futuristic shooter,

inXile Entertainment is forging its own path by meshing together two genres that regularly shouldn't be in the same vicinity – all the

while bringing a little classic dungeon crawling back into the mix.

The concept is to hearken back to yе olden days of *Dungeons & Dragons*, where you and your pubescent buddies concentrated on working together to trawl through murky caves, battling otherworldly adversaries at the behest of your friendly neighbourhood Dungeon Master, instead of chasing schoolgirl skirt. This is all about exploration, and rewarding those with the perseverance and initiative to investigate every nook and cranny.

You choose between one of two main characters, Caddoc or E'lara. Caddoc is a straight up brawler, as his massive bare chest and bulging muscle tone implies, with a penchant for beheading his enemies. He bears more than a passing similarity to "Handsome Rob" – otherwise known as Jason Statham. His partner in crime is a sexy bit o' Elfing crumpet known as E'lara, whose impressive, barely covered by the loincloth, booty is the single most mesmerising thing since Lara Croft's ample bosom graced home consoles. Oh yeah, she also favours the bow and arrow, with those left in her wake resembling a pincushion.

The two are chalk and cheese when you get into a skirmish, with E'lara ducking in and out of cover, taking her time to bring the pain with pinpoint accuracy, and even gets "execution" moves where the camera follows the arrow in slow motion until it hits its mark. Caddoc rends creatures limb from limb with brutal combinations, liking his action up close and personal.

But both characters can flip

the script. Caddoc has a bolt-action crossbow at his disposal and E'lara can dish out damage hand to hand, though they are weaker attacks. That's where "Battle Charge" comes in.

Each character has various spells at their disposal to soup up attacks for co-operative glory. E'lara's freeze spell lets Caddoc run in to crush, kill and destroy. Alternately, Caddoc's levitate allows E'lara to pick off enemies as they flail about helplessly. This is amped up by the ability to infuse your partner with the spell. So when Caddoc is wielding the crossbow, E'lara can "Battle Charge" him with lightning. All of a sudden, the weaker of attacks is now juiced up and the playing field has been levelled. Interesting stuff, yes?

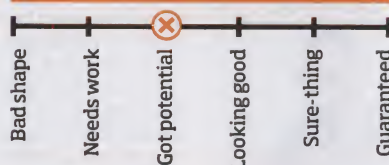
Add on the genuinely noodle scratching puzzles, with most hints hidden in audio clues no less, and *Hunted: The Demon's Forge* is starting to hit the right notes. It'll be interesting to see what sort of tune it plays closer to completion. **Dave Kozicki**

THEY SAY

"We are thrilled to be working with Bethesda Softworks on this upcoming release that takes us back to our roots"

WE SAY

Early days yet. The concept and characters sound okay – albeit typical – but they need to amp up the combat a bit. We're looking forward to see what they can tweak.



EASTER EGG:

Jimmy Patterson, the grandson of the original Jimmy Patterson from earlier *Medal of Honor* games is in the Army Rangers, and will play a large role in *Medal of Honor*. Just how, we don't yet know.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SHOOTER | EXPECTED RELEASE: OCTOBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: EA LA/DICE | PLAYERS: 1-TBA

MEDAL OF HONOR

The next step in modern warfare

THE PITCH

Take one part *Modern Warfare 2*, one part *Bad Company 2*, add in the tone of *The Hurt Locker*, and blend 'til smooth.



It's a two horse race for your shooter dollar this year. While *Call of Duty* is going back in time, *Medal of Honor* is rebooting and is breaking from tradition, setting itself in the present (well, March 2002). *Modern Warfare 2* has a lot to be worried about.

We already know about the Tier 1 guys, the elite soldiers from all the armed forces. EA has worked pretty closely with these guys yet they don't even know their real names. Their involvement is making this one of the most authentic games ever made, as they provide insight to what they think and how they'd tackle a problem. Beyond the tactical element that gives the game its soul, *MOH* is one glorious game to look at and listen to. While it's on other consoles and PC, the PS3 is the team's lead platform, so you know this is going to be an optimised title.

Set in Afghanistan's Shahi Kot Valley the battleground is tight set pieces woven into wide-open ranges, mountains spanning the

horizon. Pacing is carefully crafted, levels switch between Tier 1's silent assassinations and all-out Army Ranger warfare, and different approaches are available when taking down the enemy. The story thread focuses mostly on Rabbit, one of the Tier 1 soldiers, and the actions of each of the units will cross over. You might even just see yourself from an earlier mission, or see the repercussions of what you did or didn't do.

Sound design is genre leading. The crack of bullets rings out around the open area, the cool, collected conversations between the Tier 1 guys and the slightly looser chatter between the Rangers define this as a soldier's story, foregoing the political shtick. They're still a tight team, but their emotions are more prevalent than the ice-cold Tier 1 dudes. We were told that when EA spoke to the elite soliders and asked them what they'd say during a mission, they were told 'nothing'. Everyone knows their role, and their missions

were rehearsed before they went hot. The dialogue you'll hear in the levels is, instead, a riff on what goes through their heads as they're on duty.

The most exciting part, though, is that DICE is crafting the multiplayer. Don't expect to see *Bad Company 2* levels of destruction, but do expect it to be well-polished with some destructible over. We got some limited hands-on time over two team-deathmatch levels (before we were booted out of the E3 judges-only area that we'd snuck into), but we do know that having two developers dedicated to what they do best is definitely paying off. Upgrades are applied to your gear rather than your soldier, but your character changes their appearance and spoken phrases based on how experienced they are.

It's going to be a great year for consumers, but depending on the release dates of *Duty* and *Honor*, you're going to have to make a tough choice. **Paul Taylor**

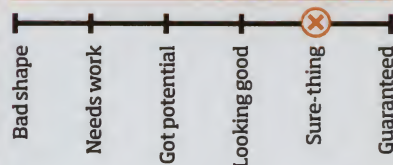
Generation Kill: they hate doors

THEY SAY

"Inspired by real people and real events, the game puts players in the boots of today's warrior"

WE SAY

We've seen the single- and multi-player in action and it's damned engrossing. A much more serious and authentic experience compared to Activision's *Black Ops*.



INDEPTH



HUSTLE AND MUSCLE

Driver: San Francisco is taking the series back to its roots, four sequels in. It's all about fast cars, nerve-wracking chases, and more burnt rubber than a Torana in a Coles carpark at midnight. So how do you make an 11-year-old gem new again? Easy. Prepare to *shift*

WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR

We're at the corner of Mason St and California St in San Francisco, daring ourselves to stand on the apex between flat ground and the road that dramatically drops away. Getting to the top on foot is hard, falling down it would be harder. The parked cars on the side of the road, their tails flush to the houses behind them, lean comically sideways.

In the world of *Driver: San Francisco*, Martin Edmondson, the Creative Director of the game from Ubisoft Reflections, is barrelling up and around San Francisco's hills in the game's hero car – a 1970 Dodge Challenger – chasing a fastback through some of the city's backstreets.

"*Driver* was always known as 'the ultimate car chase game'," explains Edmondson. "What we've tried very hard to do is maintain the core values that were important to the original game, renew them and bring them to *Driver: San Francisco*."

TRAILBLAZING

A history lesson. Before *Grand Theft Auto III* changed everything the world now expects from an open world game (and games in general), *Driver* was out there burning rubber whilst it blazed the trail in 1999. Iconic American cars sat low and heavy on suspension so spongy you could spread whipped-cream in the middle and call it a birthday cake. The world was large for its day and the action was fast, fun, and rock-hard towards the end. The emphasis was on excitement, and it gave car-chase freaks a fine reason to own a PlayStation.

“From a gameplay point of view, you’ll see big slides with the car’s back end out”

MARTIN EDMONDSON



GOOD COP, BAD COP

You’re born alone, you die alone. In the middle, though, there’s multiplayer. Martin Edmondson explains the ethos behind *Driver: San Francisco*’s online modes.

“We have a very heavyweight online aspect, and Shift really transforms the driving experience and the way it works. If you look at many driving games, especially racing titles, if you have a crash on the first bend then that’s the end of it for you. You have a lot of distance to make up. With shift, all the players are constantly shifting around between vehicles. What it gives you is the feeling of the end of a kart-racing game, where people are flipped around right at the very last moment. A guy could be a while behind you – and not all the missions are racing missions – and something could just swap right at the very end. All bought about by shift. It’s quite surprising when you play it and what kind of dynamic it introduces. It’s really about focusing on fun. We choose something that we think would be fun and we do it. It doesn’t need a mission, it doesn’t need a justification so much. So capture the flag is one of many multiplayer modes; it doesn’t need a context any more than it being capture the flag.”



Tanner’s yellow fixation continues unabated

Everything was purely about the pursuit; there was no on-foot exploration, shoot-outs or hand-to-hand combat. Your car, dictated at the start of the level, was your only avatar. Those Hollywood, TV-style roots show early into the demo. Edmondson’s only 30 seconds or so in and we’ve already ticked off ‘smash through a massive bunch of boxes’ and ‘destroy a chain link gate’ as things to

see and do. He’s barely keeping up with the car in front as he weaves between the traffic and recoiling pedestrians.

“This is something that we tried very hard to bring back, that real feeling of exhilaration when being in a chase,” he says. Adding to the atmosphere is the in-car view, where we can see Tanner’s hands on the wheel and the world reflected in the rear-view mirror.

“It’s one of the most famous views in a ‘70s car-chase movie,” verifying its authenticity as Tanner screams past cars on the street. A semi-trailer starts to cut in front of the Challenger. The cab flicks past and it looks like the Dodge is going to be squashed under the rig’s rear wheels. Edmondson slides the car underneath the trailer as he sucks in his breath. He passes through, just. The chase continues.

While the city with its steep hills, curved roads and movie connotations is glorious, cars take centre stage. For the first time in the series *San Francisco* features licensed motors – roughly 130 – of varying vintages. We can predict now that most popular will be those that can get the most sideways the most often. Edmondson’s keen to flaunt the Dodge’s ease of loosening its rear wheels with a massive slide around a corner, watching Tanner struggle to correct the car’s oversteer while he fishtails it back into line. “From a gameplay point of view, you’ll see big slides with the car’s back end out. It’s a ‘too much power, too little traction’ approach to the handling.”



Who’s the bad-ass cat who rolls in the top banana? “SHIFT!” You’re damn right!

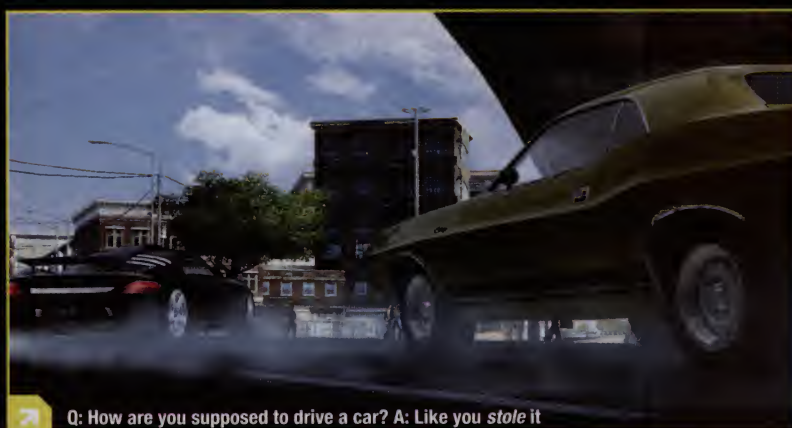
DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO



We've been on this real-life street. Accidentally knocked over a hobo. Just saying



You can almost hear the *Blues Brothers* theme...



Q: How are you supposed to drive a car? A: Like you stole it

ARE YOU GOING (TO SAN FRANCISCO?)

We've been in the real city for only a few days, getting to grips with the environment. Apart from the angular hills and skyscrapers there are stacks of open areas with wide streets perfect to pick up a lot of speed. Every car we see, though, is sticking to the speed limit of 40 in the residential areas. It's not surprising, as the gradient of the roads approaches 32 degrees in some parts. Surprisingly the city didn't smell like a combination of burning brakes and stressed transmissions.

"One of the reasons we picked the city wasn't just the movie connection, it was for big hills. It adds a certain level of topography that adds to the experience and also quite a few curved roads," said Edmondson.

Driver: San Francisco takes place only a few months after the events of *Driver 3*. Joining Tanner is his partner Tobias Jones, and his nemesis Jericho. Fans of the series

will know that at the end of *Driver 3*, Jericho shoots Tanner. From the start of the game Tanner is in a coma. All of the game's events seem real to him, but we know what's going on. Initially this seems like a hackneyed premise, but it gives credibility to one of the title's biggest gameplay devices called 'shift'.

During the game you can change your car by 'shifting' out of it. Press a button, and your view changes so that you're looking down onto the chaos and the traffic. Everything moves in super slow-mo and you're free to roam around the world using this new birdseye perspective. This viewpoint is Tanner's as he floats above the world, and he can see everything that's going on like a petrol-head deity.

Position the cursor over a car and you can see what model it is, the year it was made, total cylinders, power, weight, torque and its drivetrain. Edmondson explains it by saying "Tanner knows his cars so that's why we can see all their stats." The guy he was

KEEP THE CAR RUNNING

Driving games have gone from being racing around a track in one car, to open world, to ultimate car customisation. But where will the road ahead take us? According to Edmondson, "There's a boring answer to that: 3D. I would love to see a really well done driving game in proper stereoscopic view. Some of the 3D TVs I've seen recently just aren't that great. There's a little bit of flickering: it's not brilliant, but that's going to get better. Imagine bigger screens, more peripheral vision in 3D. It'd be fantastic to see everything jump out at you.

"I'd also like to see, personally, far more realistic damage. We're a bit limited in what we can do because of what manufacturers are happy with. I'm not talking about ripping them to shreds, just the subtleties of the damage. So if you watch *The French Connection* that car starts off fairly pristine and as it progresses through the car chase it gets a little bang here and a little smack here. The directors have been very careful to maintain that continuity so that car gradually deteriorates and I would love to see that amount of detail there.

"When you hit a car it doesn't have predefined damage, it has very complex maths based crumpling meshes. This type of destruction is a very long way away. Maybe PlayStation 6! I'm talking about really precise stuff, where you take a real car, crash it at 10 miles per hour in a corner, look at it, and that is exactly what the game does."

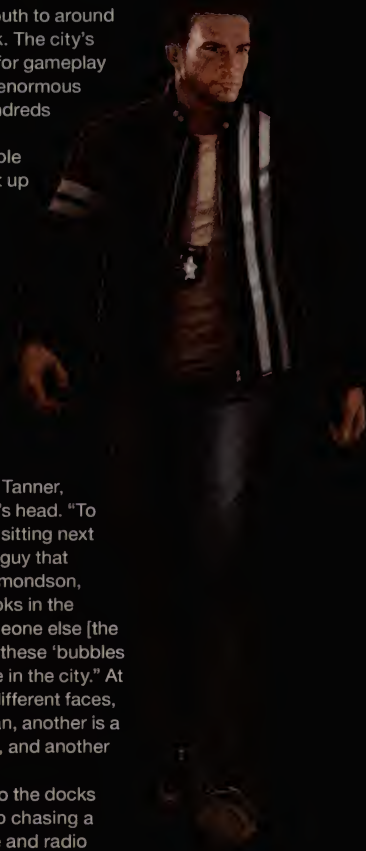
chasing is getting away – slowly – and he could either shift to another car to get closer to the chase or just abandon it all together.

Edmondson hovers over a couple of cars and we can see a Bentley, an Alfa Romeo and so on. Click shift and we're driving that car. It doesn't matter whether it's driving in the same direction or coming the opposite way, or if it's on the same street or not. The feature upgrades from being five storeys above the world to 40-odd, giving a great top-down view of the famous Transamerica Pyramid, to a view approaching the Earth's atmosphere. The entire city spreads out below, from downtown to north of the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County, and south to around San Bruno Mountain state park. The city's crushed down a touch, purely for gameplay reasons, else you'd be driving enormous distances. We're promised hundreds of kilometers of roads as it is.

This shift ability isn't available from the start; its power is built up as the game progresses. Cars are still selectable in this view, and as you move the camera around you can jump into them on the fly. It's possible to shift down into a car right from the sky, and when you take it you don't just take it cold. You actually become the character that's in that car – it gets a little *Being John Malkovich* at this point.

While you're still playing as Tanner, he's now inside this new driver's head. "To the point of view of the person sitting next to that driver in the car, it's the guy that was there before," explains Edmondson, patiently. "But when Tanner looks in the mirror, he sees the face of someone else [the person that is driving]. We call these 'bubbles of life'. There are loads of these in the city." At this point the screen fills with different faces, all talking. One's a businessman, another is a guy going for a drive in the city, and another is a girl going somewhere else.

Edmondson zooms down to the docks and takes over the role of a cop chasing a Mustang, sirens wailing above and radio



Car facing one way – the wheels another. *Righteous*



"Hey, good lookin'. We'll be back to pick you up later"

CUT TO THE CHASE

"It's about doing it for real with real cameras, no silly visual effects, real stunt drivers actually doing what you see on the screen. That's the inspiration and actually being involved in the car chase." This is what Martin Edmondson has based the thrill of the chase in *Driver: San Francisco* on. Our advice: take away your *Fast and Furious* and replace with a dose of the following to see how it's really done.

The movie: *Bullitt*

The cars: 1968 Ford Mustang, 1968 Dodge Charger
The king of the car chase, featuring a nine minute car chase through San Fran where the car reached speeds of over 175 km/h.

The movie: *Mad Max*

The cars: 1974 Ford Falcon XB, 1972 Holden HQ Monaro
Ford versus Holden. It's an age old battle. Want to see who wins in *Mad Max*. Watch the opening scenes of this Aussie classic.

The movie: *Vanishing Point*

The car: 1970 Dodge Challenger
A flat-out burn from Colorado to California, starring the very car set to make an appearance in *Driver: San Francisco*.

The movie: *The French Connection*

The car: 1971 Pontiac LeMans
In a race with *Bullitt* as the great classic car sequence of all time, this Brooklyn chase is one of the best in movie history.

The movie: *Ronin*

The cars: BMW M5, Peugeot 406
Ronin features not just one of the best modern car chases ever, but two. It's the second, through the streets and tunnels of Paris, that amazes most.

The movie: *Gone in 60 Seconds*

The car: 1973 Ford Mustang Mach 1
Famous for having wrecked and destroyed 93 cars in a 34-minute car chase scene, you can't have a car chase list without this one.

The movie: *The Bourne Supremacy*

The cars: GAZ Volga 3110, AMG Mercedes Benz G-Wagen
The greatest car chase of last decade? We can't think of another. Battered Russian taxi takes on German performance SUV. Brilliant.

The movie: *The Italian Job*

The car: Mini Cooper S
Three Mini Coopers blitz through shopping malls, through sewer pipes and across the roof of a Fiat factory in one of the craziest chases ever.

The movie: *The Dukes of Hazzard*

The car: 1969 Dodge Charger
The spirit of throwing muscle cars sideways and through the air is alive and well here. Watch this thing drifted with pinpoint precision through Atlanta.

The movie: *The Driver*

The car: 1969 Mercedes-Benz 280 S
A classic Merc is systematically destroyed, while still remaining driveable, in a parking garage. Sound like the first level in the original *Driver*? It's not a coincidence.

The movie: *Quantum of Solace*

The cars: Aston Martin DBS, Alfa Romeo 159
Short but sweet – a gritty, desperate, CGI-less chase that leaves one of the world's most beautiful cars in ruins. Word is there were three Alfas, but they shortened it and cut one. Why?

The movie: *Bad Boys II*

The car: Ferrari 575M Maranello
The abundance of CGI doesn't help, but there's no doubting the MacArthur Causeway sequences, featuring cars tossed from a semi, is smashing.



Nobody escapes the fuzz. Except criminals

chatter coming through the two-way. Another police car is up ahead, also in pursuit. In situations like this there's also a rapid shift ability where you can switch between the two partner vehicles. After (intentionally) using a wall as a brake, Edmondson shifts into the other cop car, and keeps the chase going. Flicking back and he's in the original car that's jammed into the wall. One more time and he's in the still-moving cop car. All of this happens on the fly.

The AI takes over the crashed car, sticks it into reverse and continues the chase.

"Somebody who's driving well is always going to drive better than the AI; we've tuned it so that it's better that you're in the car," says Edmondson. "Your partner will join you eventually."

Shift, though, allows more than rapid changes and awesome views of the city. "I might want to use a totally different vehicle to end this chase," says Edmondson as he hovers above the world. "Even though I've shifted out [of the police car], the chase is still going; the AI has taken over." He scouts further up the road to look for something a bit more heavy duty. He soon finds an 18-wheeler rig, yanks it in front of the Mustang and turns the muscle-car's nose

into a sheet of corrugated iron your dad would be happy using as the roof of his shed.

"I'm really pleased that we have something that introduces a new element", continues Edmondson, talking about shift. "It is about tactics but it's not overbearing; it's not a traffic management thing. We could've had something that had you managing squads of cars but it's nothing like that. A lot of it is just reactionary; when you're playing you see something and say 'I need that, I love that'.

"The cars in the city are the players tools, in much the same way as different types of guns would be in a shooter. It's all about selecting the right tools, so you've seen the cars and the rig, but there's also a tow truck – I'm sure you can imagine what you can do with that – and also an articulated car transporter. That's basically a ramp driving around." Possibilities form immediately.

"If you shift into a car, and it's just some guy driving with no-one else inside to talk to, you'll just carry on about your business [as normal]. But if you shift in to a car and it's a couple going for a drive and the guy's wife is sat next to you and you start driving like a maniac, she starts making comments. If it's a mission that you've shifted into then



"I wish I knew how to quit you, inmate"

DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO



Not pictured, but not far away: two guys carrying a big bit of glass across the street



you're immediately aware of what's going on – they'll be talking about what they're doing. If it's a cop, then he'll use the lingo."

Of course, not everyone's going to have a mission, and not everyone can be taken over immediately. "Each driver has willpower and that's what you use to judge whether you can acquire that person or not. If they're very focused, and until you build your own willpower up, you can't have that car."

Shift isn't an unlimited resource; you have to earn it. Best way? Cool driving tricks that take a few cues from the *Burnout* school of pelting through traffic. Edmondson rattles them off like he's ordering what he wants on his next pizza: "tail-out slides, over-taking cars, dense traffic, jumps and so on."

BOXING CLEVER

All this action barely takes a hit on the frame rate. The code we see is still fairly early as some buildings didn't have walls, and it was only running at 50 frames per second – by the time this is in your PS3 later this year it'll be at the full 60. The physics engine has been developed over years and years, all the way back to *Destruction Derby* on PSone. It's much more complicated now but that's when

the team started the principles of the physics.

Like every good open-world racer, there won't be any loading screens as the entire world is stored within your PS3's memory. Unfortunately, this means we won't be able to place stacks of boxes wherever we want.

"[Our San Francisco] is an extremely finely tuned environment," says Edmondson. "Where we put those boxes, it's not simply a matter of just a matter of putting down boxes, there's a certain allocation to achieve the frame rate we're working on, and it's [also a matter of] constantly shifting textures in and out and it's not conducive to a system that allows any sorting of world building."

However, this means this is going to be all about the gameplay, and the chase. Your time in the city won't be muddled by hopping out of the car and running around, trying to steal something else that doesn't look like it's just been driven by the Blues Brothers.

"One of the things we wanted to do was remain core to the experience of the car chase," says Edmondson. "Shift gives us big advantages to swap between the vehicles; it negates the need to get out of the car and walk around unless you were going to have on-foot missions that involved getting

DODGE THIS!


In true car movies the star vehicle is as crucial to the film as the main character. Frank Bullitt's '68 Mustang is as iconic as Steve McQueen himself. Who is *Mad Max* without his battle-hardened XB Falcon? Games often have trouble maintaining this kind of relationship due to the fact they regularly use plain-looking facsimiles of cars in place of real ones. But you can't connect with a fake car. It's got no heart.

Reflections understands this, so that's why *Driver: San Francisco* features licensed cars – over 100 of them, in fact.

The most important one, the hero car, is Tanner's 1970 Dodge Challenger R/T – in Top Banana yellow, no less. The Challenger, a latecomer to the US pony car wave, owes its menacing front end and aggressive looks to the same bloke who designed the Dodge Charger. Pitched to compete against the likes of the Mustang and Camaro, the Challenger arrived just in time to make an impact before declining muscle car sales killed it off four years later. The Challenger remains a relic of an era where cars were made to look good, go fast, and be loud enough to blow your best girl's clothes right off.



out and walking around on foot, which we were never wanted to do with *Driver: San Francisco* anyway." These advantages aren't limited to just easily swapping your old car for a new one. It means the gameplay remains dynamic; there's no conceivable reason why you'd ever be stationary. The pace of *Driver: San Francisco* ought to be astonishing.

We leave feeling enthusiastic, but also curious. One thing that was core to *Driver* was its director mode. After completing a stage you could go back into the replay and fiddle near-endlessly with the camera angles. Apart from two of its sequels, there's never been another driving game that's done this. Are we going to see it again? "Well you never know, I certainly can't confirm or deny it here," Edmondson says with a wry smile. "But remember, *Driver* is all about Hollywood car chases." 



FEAR AND LOATHING IN NEW VEGAS

Take a Vault over the Sunset Strip

WORDS: DAVE KOZICKI

Obsidian Entertainment doesn't do anything by half measures. Its first original IP, *Alpha Protocol*, is just around the corner – but before the year's out it'll deliver to the buffet of the RPG smorgasbord another culinary delight sure to whet your appetite. On the heels of what some considered 2008's Game of the Year, *Fallout 3*, comes the next irradiated dose of awesome: *Fallout: New Vegas*.

Obsidian Entertainment is trying to find the right balance between fan service and innovation and it looks like this porridge is just right. Showing us the radioactive ropes on our tour of Vegas is Obsidian Entertainment Creative Designer Chris Avellone – and we couldn't think of anyone else more fitting (see 'Nobody Does It Better'). He kicks off proceedings touching on the new direction the series is moving in.

"Where *Fallout 3* begins with your birth, growing up in the Vault, and going out and exploring the wasteland, *Fallout: New Vegas* starts a little differently from that," says Avellone. "It actually starts with your death."

Begin. Bang! Dead. After a crude smack in the face to refocus our attention, Avellone elaborated.

"When you start the game, you're kidnapped by a gang of thugs and you have two bullets put into the back of your skull, and dumped in a shallow grave," he says. Game over? Well, at least we went out in true Vegas fashion; double tap to the back of the head and buried in the desert. So what's the plan for *Fallout 4*?

We ducked past another refocussing backhand to let Avellone finish.

"You're rescued by a kindly robot named Vic, who takes you to a local doctor in the town of Goodsprings and here's where you kick off the character creation process," he says.

Apparently you used to be a courier, and that's what got you into that little spot of bother in the first place. We weren't told any more than that, but you can bet a silver dollar that a Vegas courier, pre- or post-apocalypse, is going to attract more than his fair share of trouble.

"You've got all the basics intact from *Fallout*

3, like your S.P.E.C.I.A.L. [Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility and Luck] system," explains Avellone. "We have new level names for each of the stats as well as definitions, so you can see what these skills will effect and how the game mechanics will differ. Once you get to a certain point, or level in a direction, the Doc will make a comment."

He was right. With the newly distributed characteristics of a bee-stung Mike Tyson (distributed by an old school "Love Tester" machine) the Doc exclaims, "I'm surprised anyone would want to tangle with you. Heck, you could go Death Claw hunting with a switch." It really sets the tone, and whilst these are small changes from their last title, they are refreshing nonetheless.

Mirroring the brilliant opening of *Fallout 3*, where you read baby books to balance out your avatar, filling out the rest of your skills were a series of psychological tests to ascertain if the bullets bouncing around your noggin didn't leave you a raging psycho.



NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

When many of you sit there wondering why the *Fallout* franchise such a beast in the RPG world, think about its pedigree. Think about the strong PC roots, sure – but most of all think about this guy, Chris Avellone. He's had his grubby little design fingers in pies all over, including *Fallout 2* and *3*, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, *Champions of Norrath*, *Knights of the Old Republic II* and *Alpha Protocol*. From his background you can easily see he's part Elven warrior, part Jedi, a little covert operative and totally ninja. Clearly the series is in very good hands.



7 "Frrrrriend?!"

Steroids vending machine: please deposit your testicles to confirm purchase

Beginning with a word association exercise and concluding with a Rorschach ink blot test these tests balance your state of mind, help you determine your skill set and reinforce the subtle nuances that has made this franchise one of the best in the industry.

After pimping out our hero (the focus being on Barter, Explosives and Guns) the Doc throws us a Pipboy and sends us out into the good ol' town of Goodsprings to cue a tutorial stage – but veterans need not worry.

"We recognise that most players have probably finished *Fallout 3* or they want to get straight to the action," says Avellone, "so once you go outside Doc Mitchell's house, you are free to navigate the Mojave Wasteland and begin your adventures."

This is also where maniacs can choose Hardcore Mode (see 'Are You Hard Enough?') – which can be switched down, but not reversed back. Then it's off to New Vegas.

The feel and look definitely resemble American frontier life and looks decidedly different to the prequel. "We wanted to maintain much of the ruined feel of *Fallout 3*, but the New Vegas Wasteland is a much different place to the Capital Wasteland," says Avellone. "We wanted to experiment with different colour palettes. The beautiful blue sky you see is due to the fact that nuclear warheads didn't actually hit the Nevada region, so the overcast ashen sky you saw in other *Fallout* titles isn't present here.

It really has a Old West kind of feel."

You really do get that sense. After a rudimentary getting to know you session by reacquainting ourselves with the ins and outs of speech and bartering we set about rousting out a local gang that'd been terrorising the folk of Goodsprings. We then stopped-over at the neighbouring town of Primm to a welcoming barrage of sniper fire from a roller-coaster before hitting our first real test: Black Mountain Communications Station.

Once we arrived at the communications array we saw that it was completely overrun by Super Mutants. These irradiated sons o' bitches, however, now have a new twist. It's been three years since the events that took place in *Fallout 3* and the mutants themselves have mutated.

"Basically, there's two generations now of

“The feel and look definitely resemble American frontier life”

Super Mutants that reside at Black Mountain," says Avellone. "The first generation are actually remnants of the Master's Army from *Fallout*, and there's also the second generation that were present in *Fallout 2*. The two groups don't always see eye to eye. So you can sneak into their main radio hub here to interfere with their broadcast."



ARE YOU HARD ENOUGH?

Found *Fallout 3* a tad easy? Up for more of a challenge? Obsidian Entertainment has got you covered. Knowing well that some of you prefer to really test your mettle, it's included a nutbustingly tough 'Hardcore' mode. Embark across the wasteland where everything matters. You'll need to eat and drink to avoid dehydration, healing via Stimpaks now takes place over real time, (not instantly) and even your ammunition now takes up weight in your inventory. For those of you crazy enough to knock it out, they're promising a worthwhile reward at the end, but mum's the word on what it is.



"Damn. I lost my target in the page break"

After a brief slugging match to incite a mini mutant civil war, Chris elaborates on the differences between the generations.

"The first generation are extremely tough as they've been around for a very long time," he says. "Whereas the second generation are not quite as tough, and somewhat stupider, so the first generation often refers to them as 'dum-dums', but since you're aware of the two factions, you can turn them against each other and just mop up the mess afterwards."

He wasn't kidding either. As soon as we ducked out to have a peek, the two generations were going hammer and tongs on each other. It was a pretty one-sided contest, with the first gen going to town on the young upstarts. But to add a bit more chaos to the mix we bore witness to one of the most overpowered pieces of weaponry we've ever seen. One of the new modifiable tools in your arsenal: the grenade machine gun.

What's that, you say? That sounds like seventeen levels of awesome? Damn right it does. After seeing the glint in our eyes, Avellone responds to our slack jawed disbelief.

"When our project director said he'd made this, I almost laughed out loud and questioned,



A hole – in your head – in one



Hey bro, slip me some skin. No, seriously"

FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS



"Where should I get sand for more sandbags?" We're in a desert, dingus

You must be this dead to ride this rollercoaster



Audio cue: bad-arse whistling

TRIP THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

As we told you earlier there are some pretty special characters littered about the wastelands in *Fallout: New Vegas*. Special mention must be made of the self-important, self-styled, self-named 'Fantastic'. After listening to this alleged scientist talk for more than a few seconds, his voice resembled Christian Slater's so closely we had to do an auditory double take to make sure it wasn't him. When we asked the question, we were given a resounding no; though Avellone did allude that there was a certain sound they were shooting for and one of the directors pushed hard for a Slater-esque edge.



'Are you seriously going to do this weapon?'" he says. "So now that we've got this grenade machine gun, you can also modify its rate of fire with a high speed rotor on it and it's perfect for any street cleaning operation." This was the most ridiculous, super-happy-fun way to create as much Mega Mutant salsa as you could desire and row after row of mutants were mowed down in quick succession.

Giggling maniacally, we almost missed a secured door. Well, secured with the password already entered (bless those dumbass mutants!). We popped the door and were met by a ghoul named Raul, who has been held captive. This was our first look at the new Companion Wheel.

"It's one of our brand new interfaces in *New Vegas*", Avellone explains. "It contains all the dialogue options you had in *Fallout 3*, plus if you want to change the AI settings, if you want to give him

Stimpaks or you want to change his equipment, you can – just using this wheel."

To show us the intricacies, Avellone had Raul change from his very powerful weapon to a near useless melee instead. Raul's speech reminded us a little of *Tattoo from Fantasy Island* with a thick Latino accent, and the sarcasm in his response was palpable as he muttered, "Sure, I'll stop using my rather effective gun, and switch to... ahhh... this piece of metal tubing... here. Great plan, boss." Yet before we could even wipe away the tears of laughter, we were whisked away to our final destination of our tour: the power plant Helios One.

This was a basic infiltration mission that illustrated the reputation system, where you can work for the common good or forge your own path and be a tad more selfish. The power plant is in disarray thanks to the genius head scientist's inability to align the solar panels. The scientist, known as 'Fantastic' speaks of himself in the third-person, sounds like Christian Slater (see 'Tripping the Light Fantastic') and is an all-round douchebag. After he convinces you to set up the dishes to kickstart the plant

you notice a little bonus plan. The plant has a giant orbital laser known as Archimedes II. Once you've armed it, you'll repel a horde of mutants attacking the plant. Then there's a final quandary: do you turn over the laser or keep that puppy for yourself? The answer seems obvious. Hell, who wouldn't want their very own portable laser? So we gave Fantastic the finger and gallivanted off with our shiny new toy as this session drew to a close.

Those who thought *Fallout 3* was deep, prepare yourselves to delve even deeper. All the in-your-face shooter action is back, balanced out with VATS, expanded companion interactivity, a flashy new colour palette, weapon and melee mods and a kind of classic Western feel to it – and it's in Vegas. The only criticism we can launch at it at this stage is that the graphics looked extremely similar to *Fallout 3*, which was an astounding looking title in its own right, though now a year or so behind the times.

Sometimes, however, you've got to roll a hard six and see how they land. Never tell us the odds; we're putting the ranch on Obsidian. It's looking like a pretty safe bet. **B**



Godzilla ain't got nothin' on this guy

One of the new modifiable tools in your arsenal: the grenade machine gun





THE LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR IN THE NORTH

WORDS: DAVE KOZICKI

WITN'S FOLKIE

We want it...

It was crisp as we entered into the hallowed halls of Snowblind Studios in Seattle. It seemed the very elements themselves had taken the studio's name to heart.

The blistering cold that accompanied us that afternoon set the tone. That took care of the "snow" part. The "blind"-ness came about once we got a glimpse at the latest hush-hush addition to *The Lord of the Rings* book/game/comic/everything franchise. It looked good. Damned good. Forget the past and the mediocre gaming glory *The Lord of the Rings* hast wrought, now consider the future shining brightly as ye turn thy gaze upon the North.

GOOD LORD

Avid fans of *The Lord of the Rings* should remember vague references to the War in the North as the Fellowship journeyed down south to the fires of Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring once and for all. But we've all been there. Rather than get bogged down in all the lore and be boxed in by past storylines, Snowblind has chosen to cut its own path, focusing on this northern region of Middle Earth. This leaves us with something strangely familiar, yet brand spanking new at the same time, ever remaining true to the spirit of the original source material.

As we took a battering ram to the front doors of Snowblind, avoided the boiling tar, spiked stake pit and expertly dodged flaming arrows we came upon the viewing area. After dusting ourselves off, we were greeted by studio head and our guide through the demo, Ryan Geithman, who broke it down for us.

With a solid RPG background as a programmer on *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, he told us they wanted a strong focus

on co-op play, and to move into realms with significantly larger production values. Considering the pedigree, they don't get much larger than *The Lord of the Rings*. He called it "essential co-op" – where you and your partners will have to work together and doing so will earn you added bonuses and points for your skill system (to level up your character).

We tend to agree with Geithman. Nowadays cooperative play should be the norm, with many in the industry feeling that if you can kill something in a game, you may as well do it with a mate. However, *War in the North* flips the script a bit with a triumvirate of awesome WITN offers unusual three-player drop in/drop out co-op (with online and split-screen play available). He was also quick to point out that this will be a mature rated title, therefore much bloodier and more violent than the "family friendly" releases. This brought a devilish grin to our chins.

HEAD OF THE CLASS

Each of the major character classes are addressed with Elf, Dwarf and Human all getting a look in, and charged with the appropriate tasks choosing between scouts for stealth, mages for magic and warriors for heavy duty attacks. It's pretty straightforward. Each class sticks to their strengths, so prepare for disappointment those of you hoping for a dwarven mage or even female dwarves (shudder) entering the mix.

Playing scout will have you sneaking about focusing on ranged attacks to anger and confuse the enemy, mages tend to work as a support class, healing and utilising protective barriers, and warriors do what they do best – hacking the living crap out of anything and

everything. Each has its own weaknesses and presents a unique and differing experience including uncovering certain runes hidden throughout your journey that can only be read by specific classes. Those of you who want to power through areas and levels should note that all three of you can talk to different NPCs at the same time, which should cut down a lot of the drudgery chatting up every single bloody serf to glean that one nugget of information vital to the next quest.

WITH THIS RING

As Snowblind kicked off the demo we were shocked by how polished WITN is at this early stage. The forest of Mirkwood was dark and confronting, peppered with pockets of sunlight peeking in through the tree tops, illuminating our path and leading us onto the next point of interest. This was part of the team's mantra, Geithman told us. The focus is on strong lighting cues to keep your interest piqued, as the rolling mist and light-infused fog visually backed up his musing.

"We wanted to use light and dark effects and strong silhouettes to highlight and offer big reveals, balancing beauty with an inherent sense of danger," says Geithman.

He wasn't wrong, on either count. The look is simply spectacular. Vibrant and teeming with colour, yet an overwhelming sense of darkness invades the levels waiting to be banished by the light. That's where you come in.

As the first licensed title with rights to both the books and the films, Snowblind is looking to the film for the artistic style, and creating a mesh of areas familiar to fans and creating new ones from the works of heralded artists, The Brothers Hildebrandt, known for their iconic



A bow in the hand is worth two in the hair ↗



↖ "Wait, you're saying it's *not* a fancy dress party?"



"Dude, your back's on fire!" "Dude, **YOUR** back's on fire!" ↘



↖ Trevor – likes: clubbing, dislikes: long conversations

The *Lord of the Rings* art from the late '70s as well as their exceptional work of the *Star Wars* theatrical release one-sheets. All of these stylistic cues are blended together to create a living, breathing, immersive world filled with gigantic fortresses, sprawling fields and dank, dusty dungeons. It's like having a huge playground to muck around in and, with so much of the source material not yet visualised, the team at Snowblind just can't wait to dive in and make it its own.

BRAIDED BEARD?

We meet our two heroes as they traverse the forest in search of the powerful wizard Radagast, when they are set upon by a pseudo-wolf pack and a gigantic Orc. Those with an ear for detail will notice a subtle audio cue heralding the Orc's approach.

Our little midget bastard Dwarf friend really reinforces the yin and yang of opposing sides, of those fighting for the light versus those in league with the dark. He looks quite majestic, regal almost, with a braided beard cascading down, ornate helmet with soft rounded edges and immaculate chainmail and

leather armour rounding out his enormous four-foot tall physique. The Elven ranger also cuts a

similarly swanky path, with delicate features, light-coloured robes following the curves of her body. This was offset by the stark brutality and harshness of the Orc.

Those that follow the Fellowship tend to have a softer edge to them, more rounded and polished. Those attempting to extinguish the light, leave more of a jagged trail. Their armour seems battered and tarnished, well worn with spikes, harsh edges and sharpened teeth reinforcing their evil tendencies. It's a brilliant visual method of instantly discerning friend or foe and carries throughout the entire artistic process. Whether it's the texture of fabrics, brilliant shadows or aging faces, the team want you to suspend disbelief and give in to their world.

As they enter the fray, easily dispatching several Wargs (wolf-like entities) with gusto, the real enemy of the piece emerges: a huge Orc. Though sans armour, he was no pushover – not by a long shot.

Armed with an enormous mace, and surprisingly agile, he was a genuine threat and took some strategising between the two developers to get him on the back foot. As they were keeping him at arm's reach to avoid his wild swings, the Orc began pelting rocks at each character. And by rocks, we mean boulders. As the Dwarf ducked and rolled out of harm's way, it gave the Elf the opportunity for some ranged bow attacks.

Working from a distance does have some distinct advantages, with definite hit reactions from headshots, and numerous wounds to the face and increased damage eventually leading to blindness. But a wounded animal is ever *more* dangerous.

As they swept in for the kill, the Orc countered with several bitch-

It belongs to a museum...

After the drool-triggering demo ceased, we were lucky enough to take a tour of Snowblind Studios and see all the industrious little scamps at work behind the scenes. After being dragged kicking and screaming from the demo, we got a look at some of the simply stunning character concept art. The battle-armoured Orc seemed right off the film cel, as did the wizened old mage Radagast. The level of detail was astonishing, with a spotted cloak aged with years of wear and tear, as were his wrinkled features and amazing flowing beard. Why were we drooling, you ask? Because the characters looked as close to the concept art as you could possibly ask.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR IN THE NORTH

One game to rule them all

Perhaps having to focus on established characters (from the films) was too much pressure to get the right balance and tone in the past, but *War in the North* looks the goods – even this early. Check out this formula for success!



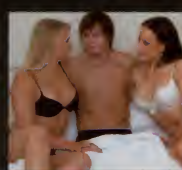
The One Ring



Books



Baldur's Gate



3-way co-op



Dead Sexy



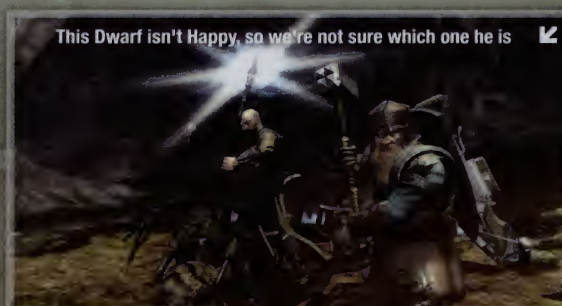
War in the North



Pointed sticks: swords are too heavy for girly arms here



No flash photography. He must've missed the sign



This Dwarf isn't Happy, so we're not sure which one he is

slappingly hard backhanders launching our heroes up off their feet. Perhaps a few flaming arrows would do the trick? Boy howdy, do they! It even showed real-time fire damage and burns on the already impressive looking character models. But it ain't over yet.

Moving in for the kill, the Dwarf was grabbed by the wildly flailing Orc where upon he was repeatedly and viciously bashed in the face. It was brutal, with the only defence a quick-time event. Once free, our little buddy delivered a punishing finishing move and it was goodnight Gracie.

IT'S MAGIC, YOU KNOW

Geithman then ran us through some of the advantages of using the Mage class, such as a protective shield that can be fired from, but not penetrated, which can eventually be upgraded to heal as well. Characters will gain back health over time, but those impatient scamps out there can always scoff down a potion for a quick fix. When playing co-op, if downed, you can be revived by your teammates, and even crawl to the nearest bit of cover until help arrives, so as not to leave your compadres open to easy attack.

He also mentioned a deep item system (oh yes, there will be treasure troves of loot) and a branching skill tree, which can be used to upgrade abilities and move your character in the direction that suits your play style the best. He even hinted about some of the voice talent to be used, claiming a mix of movie stars and character actors to be harnessed to round out the cast. Unfortunately he was pretty tight lipped on any other details like who or whom, regardless of how many non-descript briefcases filled with differing denominations of undisclosed amounts we shoved in his direction. Actually, that's a lie.

THE MANLIEST OF TEARS

Once our heart rates had slowed down to a reasonable pace, and the puddles of geek dribble had been mopped up, we were taken on a tour through each facet of the game, meeting various production heads, and creative teams (see 'It Belongs in a Museum').

Each offered a new height of 'wow' factor as we spied exceptional concept art, character models and animations. The pre-rendered animations are where we started with the "ooohs" and "ahhhs". This gloriously expanded on the brutality we'd witnessed earlier. We watched a Dwarf run through his paces against both an armoured Orc and a giant spider. Consider it a veritable Whitman's sampler of armed combat, with deep sword wounds and penetrations, spider bites, superhero type poses, decapitations and wild thrashes at the spider's vulnerable underbelly. The highlight was easily the Dwarf's commando roll through the Orc's legs, vaulting onto its back and embedding the axe into the back of its noggin for the win. Good times.

As our time at Snowblind drew to a close, we shed only the manliest of tears and bid our hosts goodbye. This was a much more bloody and stirring adventure than we'd expected. Snowblind is putting a more-than-healthy dose of action in the RPG formula and we can't wait to delve deeper into its take on Middle Earth, and see what else it's got in store for us.

Snowblind was Tolkien a big game during our visit. Let's see if it can deliver.



7 Homeboy could airlift *himself* out of danger with those Will Smith ears

PRETTY IN BRINK

Brink (noun), pronounced [bringk]

1. a. edge of something
b. verge of something crucial
2. Splash Damage's new shooter that's so damned special it's guaranteed to blow your mind

WORDS: DAVE KOZICKI

There are certain things we will never agree upon with our UK brethren. The temperature beer should be served at, for one. The correct answer, by the way, is ice cold. That soccer (or football, whatever) is a manly sport and NOT filled with ponces who'll take a dive after getting a hangnail mid-match is another.

There's one thing, however, we can easily wholeheartedly shake on – that the UK's own *Brink* is going to make a big splash. *Brink* will challenge the industry's perceptions on what a first-person shooter is, could and should be. How can you not be excited about eight-player co-op, or the generous colour palette, or the

sex-on-legs trailers? Paul Wedgwood, CEO of *Brink* developer Splash Damage, is highly excited, and so are we. It's all part and parcel with what Splash Damage is trying to do to reinvigorate and rejuvenate the genre. Come along and explore a world at breaking point and prepare yourself for (r)evolution.

We can't speak for the rest of you, but *Brink* has been on our radar for quite some time now. It just oozes appeal and dares to be different. In a world dominated by beige/brown monotone shooters with a modern militaristic slant and respawn point kill-campers by the thousand, that counts for a lot. But let's get down to brass tacks, shall we?

TICKLED BRINK

Brink is a bleak version of the future where the greenhouse effect and stuff and junk, plus rising water levels, have forced mankind to retreat to a self-sustaining eco-friendly Ark. Originally constructed to house its creators and their progeny, an influx of refugees has pushed residents to breaking point, to the, er, brink of civil war. Players can choose to side with Ark defenders as Security, and enjoy all the comforts and technology they provide while ensuring their way of life, or alternately join the Resistance, a ragtag group of rebels striving for equality via Molotovs and guerrilla tactics. Each





7 Some people say helmets. We say mohawks



THE RUNNING MAN

offers a different viewpoint to the struggle for supremacy over the Ark.

You battle it out as a member of an eight-player team either gearing up for the Resistance or suiting up for Security. You can play co-op with mates or competitively online, and it's got more options than a pushy Yum Cha lady.

Now that we've set the scene, we'll let the most exciting addition *Brink* brings to the FPS genre take centre stage. We're talking about Splash Damage's SMART technology. It's brilliant, free-flowing, simple, intuitive and it's everything *Mirror's Edge* wanted to be – and so, so much more.

Remember the first time you played *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, and you used the all-purpose "action" button to slip into cover, vault over it and switch between? Do you remember the exhilaration and joy you felt? "Holy crap," you thought. "Someone gets

it." You don't need eight million buttons, or to pause every three seconds to equip something, or claws like a praying mantis to angle your digits to get the right combination. Keep it simple, stupid, or rather, play it SMART.


BRINKY AND THE BRAIN

SMART technology is Splash Damage's Nobel Prize-winning, Oscar- and Grammy-nominated concept (true story). The idea behind it is to take the free-running/parkour aspects of something like *Mirror's Edge* and seamlessly integrate them into general gameplay allowing you to vault over cover, slide and climb effortlessly. This is easily illustrated in the acronym, which stands for Smooth Movement Across Random Terrain. Rather than just let that statement lie (or try to come up with our own considerably lamer version, like Sexified Motion Accelerates Radical Thoroughfare), we'll let Wedgwood break it down.

If you haven't seen the underpants destroying, jizz-worthy cinematic trailer that spectacularly illustrates what *Brink* has to offer, we silently weep for you, and will wait until you do so. Hurry up now.

You done? Good. Besides being eyeball-searingly good-looking, it perfectly showcases the feel and tone Splash Damage is going for. Bright colours, massive differences in character classes, off the charts parkour and a strong team-based mechanic and when you throw that all together it's cooler than a clone of the Fonz spliced with Johnny Depp and a dash of George Clooney, shaking hands with Samuel L. Jackson. Yep. It's THAT cool.

"We did toy with a cover system for a while, and experimented with one," says Wedgwood. "But what we found was we had to prepare you to be outflanked, and let you deal with that, 'cause we have to let the AI do that to you a bit as well, otherwise when you jump online, you're going to hate it."

"The plan: you get shot at, I'll fire hot lead underneath your armpits" 



“It's free-flowing, simple, intuitive and everything *Mirror's Edge* wanted to be”



“After seeing it in action we can tell you, it ain’t just hype”

“What’s critical to us is when you play you’re able to react to things yourself and control things as events happen. If I just jog towards something, and don’t use the SMART button, I’ll stop when I hit that thing. But if I’m using SMART, I’ll vault over the top, or climb above it, or slide below it, but it’s just like a jump button, it’s only when I indicate to the game that it has my permission to assist, that it’s going to jump onboard and try to help me.”

“A lot of games reward you for becoming good at their interface, which makes no sense at all, we should be rewarding players for having fun whilst playing the game.”

We couldn’t agree more. There’s nothing more frustrating than playing through a game that doesn’t let you perform basic human movements like, say, jumping over a wall a foot or so high. It just doesn’t make sense. You’re a behemoth that can destroy buildings but can’t get over a ledge a three-year-old could mantle? Seriously?

Brink is set to change all that and after seeing it in action we can tell you, it ain’t just hype. Where you can explore in each section is directly related to the class and body type you decide or the class and mission you’ve taken on, but there’s so much freedom to play with you’ll want to try them all. Wedgwood is clear on the mantra at Splash Damage.

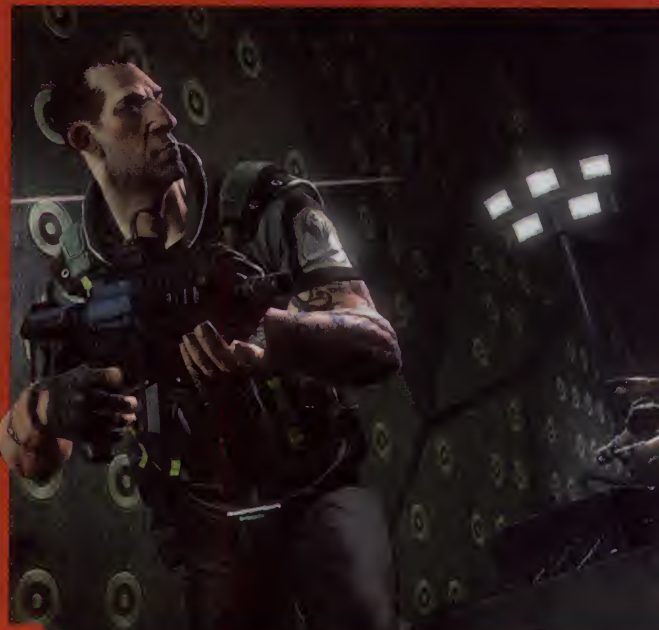
“Balance is god, he says. “When it comes

to multiplayer games, it’s the most important thing. Everything else aside, balance makes you cut things that don’t work, it makes sure weapons aren’t under or overpowered. There won’t be any single weapon that’s brilliant for all situations, just what suits your own preferred play style. That’s the result of good balancing.”

NUDGE NUDGE, BRINK BRINK

Peppered throughout each map are communication relays and these hubs are where you’ll choose your body type, be it svelte for maximum mobility and agility, a more balanced, middle-of-the-road type character, or a beefed-up bruiser with the ability to take greater amounts of damage. Each choice leads to specific missions and routes you can take, and you can switch at any time at any of these posts. Larger body types can use heavy weapons, while someone built for stealth will have a lower damage threshold but far more parkour skills. You’d hardly expect someone sporting a physique like Andre the Giant to be leapfrogging over fences and such now, wouldn’t you? It’s a balancing act with each player picking what works for them and, in the grander scheme of things, for the good of the team.

This break from traditional death match play, with a team-based, co-ordinated objective



➤ Nice situational-awareness there, Chuck

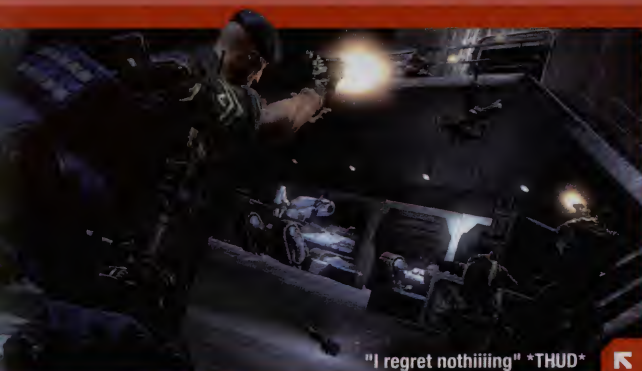


PURE GODDAMNED GENIUS!

This may be a small issue to illustrate, but we believe that *Brink* is solidly made for gamers by gamers. When our good buddy Paul Wedgwood was keyed up the first mission, during the opening cut scene, a strange thing happened... he hit a side menu to complete his character’s load out while the CG was still running, so he was good to go the second the mission began. Sounds simple, but we breathed a sigh of relief. *Someone* gets it. Hey, we love CG as much as the next guy – and as Wedgwood pointed out, “The animators don’t like it much as they put so much time into the performance capture cinematics” – but hey, sometimes you need to get on with the killing ASAP!



➤ We camp – it’s our thing. Don’t complain. Just die



"I regret nothiiiiing" *THUD*



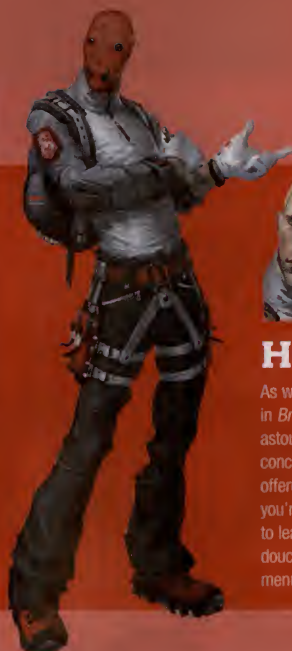
Man, what is that bulletproof vest made out of? Balsa?



structure is immensely appealing and could be the future of online gaming (as *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* has been proving). Coming from a rich online background, Wedgwood tells us the thoughts behind the mission structure of *Brink*.

"We've been playing and making games about death match and capture-the-flag for years now," he says. "When we got into *Quake Wars: Enemy Territory*, we made a very specific decision to create bigger, more elaborate, objective-driven gameplay, and we really believe it gives you the best of both worlds."

"When you have to, say, take a pass code to a security tower, it's exactly like a capture-the-flag mechanic. If you drop it, it gets returned, and you have to try again. There are other areas that you'll need to defend, and control in the game, so it's kind of like death match. We take the best moments from death match, capture-the-flag, king of the hill and weave them together into our real world, and give you a legitimate reason to do these tasks. It tends to make it a bit more immersive and real fun for new players, rather than have them sitting there thinking, why the hell would I do that?"



HE'S GOT THE LOOK

As we previously stated, the deep customisation options available to you in *Brink* are easily one of the big selling points, but the depth is quite astounding. Take this Operative character (depicted) for The Security. This concept art directly illustrates the bare minimum of looks with masks alone offered. Take into account race, body type, skin tone, clothing, colour and you're looking at hours and hours to get each character and class down pat to leave your own unique stamp on *Brink*. We're kinda partial to Guinnessy douche beards and are eagerly anticipating the stubble/three day growth menu come launch.

BRINK AND YOU'LL MISS IT

Most of the time when we hear terms like 'evolution' describing a new title we expect a new colour palette or skin, or mainly disappointment. But *Brink* delivers – big time. Each team is easily distinguishable, with the spiffy uniforms, shiny new tech and gadgetry of the Security versus the begged/borrowed/stolen/scavenged wears and well-worn weapons of the Resistance, and recognised by the neon outline around teammates.

The arsenal available to you has had a significant tweak.

"One of the big, dramatic changes we made for this game is that weapons aren't

rifle, but limited to a three round burst, there's no automatic mode for that weapon. Whenever we give someone a weapon with a specialist purpose, we do mix in some penalties to balance it against the game's other weapons.

"We've got about 24 weapons across the beta at the moment and we're still adding and removing them depending on what's working. Generally speaking, if it's fun we keep it in the game, if it's not we just cut it."

Speaking of fun, *Brink* lets you carry not just one machine gun and pistol, but two of those puppies to enhance the killing. It's another one of Ham's contributions, according to Wedgwood, and was also met with initial resistance.

"You'd think that this would just make you super powered up, but of course, everybody has the same option, so it really doesn't," he says. "You can carry something like, say, The Wreck – which is a heavy assault rifle. It's a bit slow firing,

“Brink is looking like a game changer. It looks sweet [and] plays a treat”

based on classes anymore,” says Wedgwood. “You can choose any weapon you like, providing it's allowed for your body type and you've unlocked it, no matter what combat role you're playing.”

“Initially, I was really against the idea – it was an idea of Richard Ham, the Creative Director [co-creator of *Syphon Filter*] and a genius. We've got six or seven major weapons, each with tweaked alternatives. So if you look at say, assault rifles, there are a number that serve different purposes. Like the Rock Steady, which is a very accurate

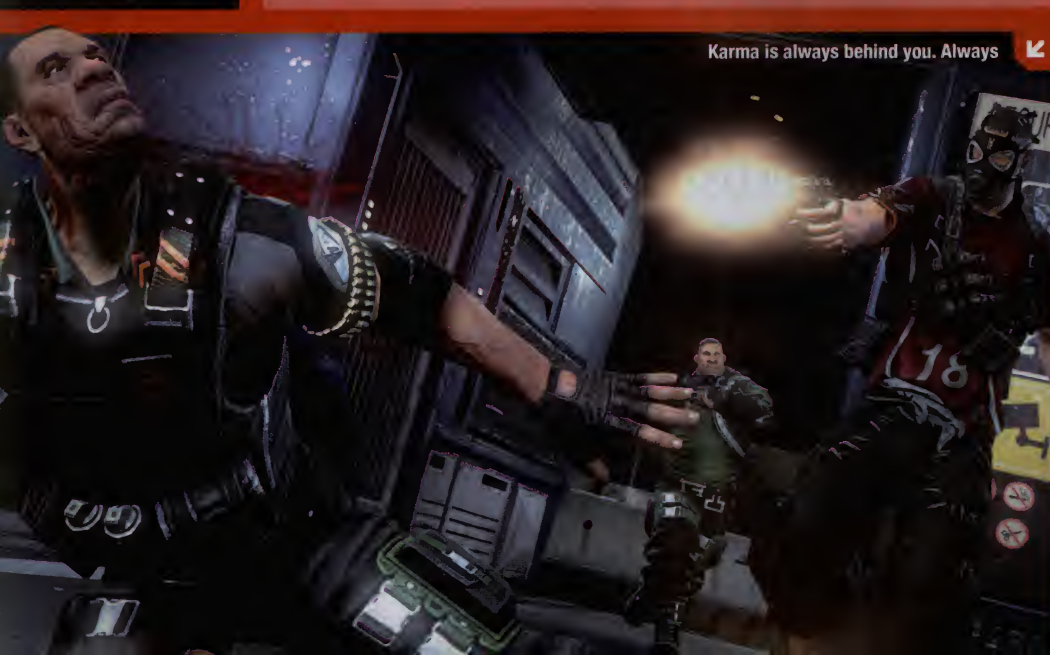
but great for picking off enemies at a distance, and couple it with The Cross submachine gun which is really a big machine pistol with a high burst-fire rate and great at close range – and you can easily switch between the two.”

Each player has both universal abilities available to everyone, and class specific ones. Two new skills are Sense of Perspective and Combat Intuition. Sense of Perspective changes your view to third-person when completing objectives, like hacking and such, to give you greater peripheral vision and less likelihood of being caught with your proverbial pants down. Combat Intuition is the greatest and simplest idea to come about since the titular team-up of water, college girls and T-shirts. When an enemy has you in their sights, a yellow marker notifies you of this on screen, so you can make a break for the nearest cover. We can already hear snipers' curses from future matches travelling down the space-time continuum into our eardrums.

There's also a simple arrow-based GPS to get you to each objective, which changes as you move through various levels, hopping, skipping and lunging. Depending on your body type it'll suggest the route you take.

KICKING UP A BRINK

Brink is looking like a game changer. It looks sweet, plays a treat and is taking player concerns into account and trying to create something new, intuitive and different. We applaud and welcome it with open arms. We'll try to contain our excitement until our next gander up its skirt.



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“Is it a better game overall than *GTAIV*? In many ways, it is”

66 RED DEAD REDEMPTION

We never drew first but we drew first blood...

THIS ISSUE

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WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS MONTH



- 50% Loading for bear
- 30% Perfecting our Angry Sackboy Mod
- 15% Bombing the Super Ultra Mega Park
- 5% Collecting chickens from bins

REVIEW RATINGS



10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.



9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.



8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once: hello *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust!*



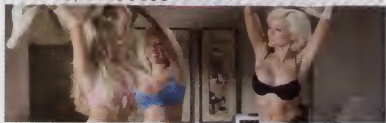
We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

“Imagine the game you’d get if you swapped Liberty City for Tombstone”



WORSE THAN

THIS, WE GUESS



BETTER THAN

GTAIV



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO | **PLAYERS:** 1-16 | **RRP:** \$109.95

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Fill your hands, you son of a...

Imagine the game you’d get if you swapped Liberty City for Tombstone, put Clint Eastwood circa 1975 in it and asked him to kill everyone. That’s *Red Dead Redemption*. And it’s awesome.

Set in 1911, *Redemption* chronicles the dying days of the West through the eyes of a former outlaw. John Marston turned his back on crime when his gang left him for dead during a botched job and settled down with his wife and son on a ranch, determined to leave his old life behind him. Unfortunately, the US federal government and the team of G-Men it has installed into the area have different plans. Marston’s family are used as bait to force him to head out into the frontier and track down the last remaining survivors of his old mob and bring them to justice. The story is torn from the scripts of more Westerns than you can poke a cow at but, aside from a lull deep in the final act, it’s more than up to chuff.

While the yarn itself is a hodgepodge of outlaw badassery, the game structure itself is drawn directly from *Grand Theft Auto*. Missions will become available as you meet people throughout the world. Some of these will be filler, and some will contribute more obviously to the main narrative. The mixture of missions is good; there’s a decent balance between simple tasks like fetching a cart full of supplies or breaking wild horses and grand events like mowing down mounted bandits from a train with a Gatling gun or large scale street shootouts.

Like *GTAIV* you can either move around the map under your own steam, or quick travel to key areas or manually set waypoints. In *Redemption* these methods include trains, stagecoaches and a campsite (at any point, while out in the wilderness, you can set up camp, save your game and quick-travel to wherever you wish).

What Rockstar San Diego has done with *Redemption*, however, is hone the off-mission play more than Rockstar North ever managed with *GTAIV*.

Unlike *GTAIV*, where the tasks you can

complete outside of missions are rigidly pre-defined, non-story bonus tasks (triggered by meeting ‘strangers’) and other ambient events that occur in *Redemption* are random and varied. Stranger missions can be started and completed on the spot, or finished much later. Some of them will play out over long periods. One stranger mission we encountered involved investigating the disappearances of a number of locals over the course of a series of nights. The secret is eventually revealed, but only after a bit of legwork.

We enjoyed the ambient events even more. Some of them repeat often (like chasing down a horse thief) but some are more rare. We stumbled across a cannibal’s camp one night on the prairie, who we killed, freeing the hogtied woman he had by his fire. One night a man rode up to us begging us to help him save his wife. We followed him and slaughtered the gang and saved his lady, who was being hanged, by shooting down the noose. On one occasion we came across a man slumped beside a dead woman in the middle of nowhere. Before we could act, he shot himself. *Redemption* teems with activity and life.

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BEST IN THE WEST

Red Dead Redemption is filled with standout missions, although we have some clear favourites. Saving a bunch of stampeding cows from tumbling over a cliff in a storm. A poker game that disintegrates into a duel with an irate German. An on-rails mission on the back of some 'cutting-edge' technology. Individual missions can be replayed from the pause menu at any point.

All this stuff earns you fame and (dis) honour. Unlike *GTA IV*, the way you act has a lasting effect on the way people react to you. Your fame increases regardless of how you act, but your honour will go up and down based on good or bad deeds.

But these tasks and events *still* aren't the half of it. Then there are the duels that wannabe gunslingers will goad you into, the poker and blackjack, the horse breaking and the bounty hunts. Then there are the hunting challenges, like taking down five wolves with a knife, or three bears with one shot each (hint: through the eyeballs). Hunting challenges net you pelts, meat and other items that can be sold to merchants for more cash to buy better guns.

What's especially good to note is the limitations that you'd imagine come with century-old weaponry are countered by the fact the gameplay itself is hugely cinematic and exciting. NaturalMotion's euphoria engine, already used to great effect in *GTA IV*, is hard at work ensuring no varmint goes down the same way twice. A rifle shot to the shoulder will spin a man on the spot and send him sprawling into the dust. Knock a man off his horse and sometimes he'll remain trapped in the stirrup, his body dragged along like a rag doll. You can shoot the hats off people's heads and the guns from their hands. Shoot a man in both legs and he won't be able to stand; he'll just fire back at you from his knees. Lasso a person while on your horse and you can drag them through the countryside, flailing about.

We played *Redemption* on the normal difficulty setting, with its soft lock-on 'snap-to' targeting system. Combined with a straightforward cover mechanic it all feels very much like *GTA IV*. A little less soggy, you might even say. A much easier setting with auto aim (and the ability to skip missions after repeated failures) and a hardcore setting with no aiming aids at all both feature.

The felony system is quite different than *GTA IV*. In *Redemption*, if you're caught misbehaving, you can surrender and do time, bribe the nearest officer or make a run for it. Each crime you commit will increase the bounty on your head, and posses and lawmen will be dispatched after you until you're dead, or submit a pardon letter or the bounty amount yourself to the nearest telegraph office.

Becoming an evil sumbitch admittedly clashes with the gist of the narrative, but John Marston is nonetheless a remarkable character. He's more than just a gruff gunslinging stereotype, and he's more than just a bearded conduit for a celebrity voiceover. There isn't a famous face behind the voice work for Marston, just a rock-solid script filled with era-perfect dialogue and quotable lines on par with any Western film favourite.

"As it turns out, it's you or me," says the hoarse Marston to a man he's been tracking for some time. "And the way I see it, it might as well be you."

This is the kind of stuff that, if uttered by the likes of Clint Eastwood on celluloid, would make you want to leave the cinema and curbstomp the first delinquent tween hipster you saw. It's no different here – and it's apparent all the way through the game.

Marston is as complex a character as you'll find in any film or novel. Marston is intimidating, yet likeable. He can be well mannered, yet unswervingly abusive. He's as comfortable exchanging playful banter as he is delivering a stoic ultimatum. He's one part loving husband, and one part stone-cold killer – and he's absolutely fascinating.

A motley crew of supporting characters bolster Marston's tale, and every one

“He's one part loving husband and one part stone-cold killer”

IT'S GOOD TO BE BAD

We asked you on the OPS Facebook page what is it about outlaws that fascinates people? Your answers are below.

Rosndonna Beaton

"They have the big brass balls to be bad and do what I cannot."

Matt Bloor

"They're so much better than in-laws."

Ryan Joseph

"Manly moustaches."

Jermaine Odoro

"The thrill of living by your own rules, and not letting anyone stand in your way, plus you get say things 'egg sucking gutter trash' which is always a plus."

Sharlene Gardiner

"It's the bad boy appeal."

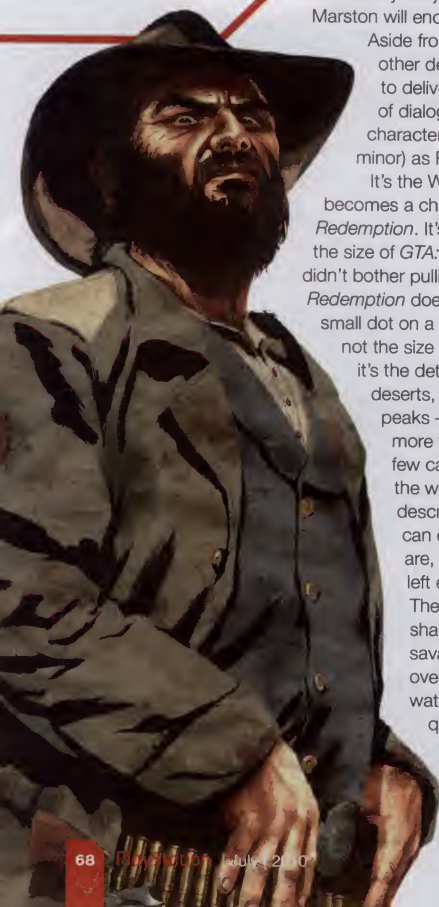
Andrew Maddock

"Nothing says awesome like an unshaven face, sweat, dirt and a six-shooter."

Jonathan Spiroff

"Because Clint Eastwood is the greatest actor of all time and is so über cool it's not funny."

To join in the discussions, visit tinyurl.com/OPSAus and become a fan!



➤ "Are you varmints trying to return the trampoline? Yeah? Well you just keep on drivin'"

“This isn't Bonanza; this is Deadwood with a bigger bodycount”

is as captivating as the last. A vivacious rancher girl, an eccentric treasure hunter, a temperate retired outlaw, a drunken Irish purloiner and a mendacious Mexican revolutionary are just some of the people Marston will encounter on his hunt.

Aside from Naughty Dog, no other developer comes close to delivering the authenticity of dialogue and credibility of characters (regardless of how minor) as Rockstar.

It's the West, however, that becomes a character unto itself in *Redemption*. It's purported to be twice the size of *GTA: San Andreas*, but we didn't bother pulling out the trundle wheel. *Redemption* does make you feel like a small dot on a vast landscape, but it's not the size that's important – rather it's the detail. Rolling prairies, dusty deserts, tree-covered snowy peaks – *Redemption* is so much more than just sand and a few cacti. Trying to describe the world itself is like trying to describe a naked woman: you can explain where the nipples are, but the subtleties are best left experienced first-hand. The sunsets that cast long shadows off everything. The savage storms that crash overhead leaving pools of water everywhere. The eerily quiet nights and the blazing hot days. You'll just need to absorb it yourself.

Like the real West

though, beneath the beautiful exterior beats an ugly heart. *Redemption*, on account of context, won't cop the same sort of flak over its bloodshed as its stable mate *GTAIV* – but *Redemption* is the more violent game. The awful effects of lead meeting a head are on display each time you nail a dirtbag in the bonce. Inspect the corpse and you'll note a caved in face and exit wound the size of a grapefruit where his skull has sprouted a sickening brain blossom. The slow-mo 'Dead Eye' system is a concession to coolness (and the brutal ballet of blasting away in slow-mo does look brilliant) but *Redemption* doesn't glamourise the West. This isn't *Bonanza*; this is *Deadwood* with a bigger bodycount.

If we had to make any particular criticisms we'd point out that *Redemption* isn't immune

from the odd technical glitch. The game is more polished than most, but if you set your gaze on the distance you will notice some pop in. We also noted that the frame rate, which is almost always steady, seemed to take a hit when we trained a scoped rifle on large clumps of enemies in the penultimate mission.

There were a few other quirky anomalies that sprung up over the course of the game. Marston's knee-length duster coat was one of the main offenders, clipping through the occasional chair and, at one point, flipping upside-down every time we grabbed onto a ledge. Aside from the fact an antique automobile features in the game that you can't ever drive, the occasional sight of a horse skidding unrealistically down steep surfaces was near our sole other technical complaint.

The only other fault we uncovered was a communication issue. There are some things it would've been nice to have had made a little clearer. Marston, for instance, can't swim. This truly is neither here nor there. However, rather



How'd Marston get the scars? Freak nose-pickin' accident. Use nail clippers, kids



Grand Theft Horse-o



Duded-up dude is duded



"Gonna paint yer wagon..."



Sensual beard shaving: romantic

than having him baulk at water the same way a slow-moving horse baulks at a cliff edge you can walk him straight in, where he'll drown. Drowning in order to discover you can't swim is fundamentally flawed. It sticks in our craw. Ideally, the limitations of a character should be conveyed in advance. We don't want to whine; we'd just like to know if we're allergic to bees so we don't go sticking our dicks in any beehives.

The last mission also caused us a little grief; not so much because of some odd pacing issues and an unconventional set-up, but because it's not signposted the way you'd expect. Don't be clever and get your 'clue' for the final mission from a newspaper. That's not the trigger. Rather, there's a stranger you need to speak to in Blackwater (the area's largest town). The problem is this stranger looks just like all the other strangers we'd began ignoring as the story heated up.

This kind of stuff, however, is small potatoes. We mention it because universally-acclaimed games like *Redemption* attract a special kind of detractor. One that's convinced he's the only person to spot the flaws. One that's convinced people are missing something.

Listen to these cynics at your own peril.

The effect of these minor blemishes on the otherwise remarkable final product is nil. As far as treatments of the West go, *Redemption* is the best in its field by an embarrassingly mammoth margin. *Redemption* is a clear category leader, and there really shouldn't

be anything to stop it from being mentioned in the same breath as the best Westerns of any medium. Purists could argue the genre is well and truly stitched up by the likes of *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*, HBO's cult-hit *Deadwood* and novels like the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lonesome Dove*. They could argue there's no room for a videogame in this elite club of more established mediums. But purists would be ignoring the fact that, unlike any of these, *Redemption* hands you the reins. It succeeds where all other Western games have failed by truly distilling the harsh experience of frontier life into one brilliant, expansive package. This game immerses you like few others.

If you're wild for the West, you will latch onto *Redemption* like an ornery rattlesnake. If the Old West is of no particular interest to you, you still ought to find it difficult not to appreciate the incredible level of workmanship and depth on display here. This is an true opus.

Redemption is a game of details. From the way gun smoke hangs in the air and drifts away from muzzles to the fact you can kick a chicken, nothing has been spared.

Is it a better game overall than *GTAIV*? In many ways, it is. Rockstar San Diego has attacked the Western genre with enough gusto to make five decent games.

If attention to detail, vigilante violence and skinning cougars interests you in the slightest, do not miss *Red Dead Redemption*. Buy it now. You're a daisy if you do. **— Luke Reilly**

THE GANG'S ALL HERE

Red Dead Redemption's multiplayer component is righteous. We've only had a few days with it at the time of going to print, and you can read a more detailed analysis on page 79, but it's fantastic. Free Roam is our favourite mode. We've been busy riding around in a posse hunting wildlife and taking on gangs. Did we mention there are unlockable mounts, including a bull? Be Mongo!

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Rockstar's best looking game yet. A pleasure to look at from every angle.

SOUND

Flawless voice acting, cracking weapon effects and a fitting score bolstered by some unexpectedly awesome licensed tracks at key game moments.

CONTROLS

A robust re-purposing of *GTAIV's* rock steady control set. Smooth and solid.

REPLAY VALUE

Huge. There's an incredible amount of gameplay on offer here — and then there's the multiplayer.

VERDICT:

Bigger, badder and more violent than *GTAIV*. What's left to ponder?

10



INFO **FORMAT:** PS3 | **GENRE:** RACER | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
DEVELOPER: UNITED FRONT GAMES | **PLAYERS:** 1-12 | **RRP:** \$109.95

MODNATION RACERS

If Sackboy got crossbred with The Stig...



Do not be deceived. While those screenshots suggest this is a simple-looking kart racer with alarmingly-cute drivers, it's really a deep and flexible title that will gobble up your precious time.

Easily described as *LittleBigPlanet* but with karts instead of platforms, the crux of *ModNation Racers* is its creation tools. Pretty much everything can be tinkered with including 'Mods' (racers), the tracks you race, as well as the karts.

You only have a fraction of the total amount of materials available from the very start, and to get the rest you'll either have to race and earn them, try your luck on the slot machine or log on to the PlayStation Store and part with cash money. Best to just race on.

The Creation Station is where you're going to lose yourself for hours as you make things just so. We knocked up a more than passable Angry Sackboy in half an afternoon. Then we did the same thing with *Top Gear's* Stig, and a T-1000 in about 15 minutes – he even had super shiny skin as we changed his material to purely metal.

You will, however, spend a lot longer making your own tracks, and if you read last month's issue you will have seen our Bathurst track recreation that took the best part of a day. The track creator is expansive, with hundreds of tools for decoration, ground elevation and so on. We have no doubt it would be entirely possible to recreate the world's top racetracks using the tools on offer.

If you reckon your creations are cool, it's a doodle to publish and release them into the wild. Everything that's made by the community is free to download, and the highest ranked stuff is displayed in the main hub. We spied a towering

B. A. Baracus and right next to him was the A-Team van. A few button presses later and they were both ours.

The racing side of the game is dead solid if a little frantic when you're bunched up in the middle and weapons are flying everywhere. Single player is a means to an end as you're trying to collect everything for your creations, but there are also time trials to race for online fame, and – bless 'em – four-player local splitscreen. As long as you're prepared to take a slight frame-rate hit you've probably found the next best way to settle an argument.

Only a few things prevent this from earning a perfect score. While we get that there has to be stuff locked away, it's a bummer that some landscaping tools aren't initially available. Also, the banter that goes on in-between races is pretty painful, despite the high production values.

Ultimately, you'd be foolish not to buy this. It's more expressive than *LittleBigPlanet* but much more accessible, and guaranteed to keep you playing for a long, long time. **Paul Taylor**

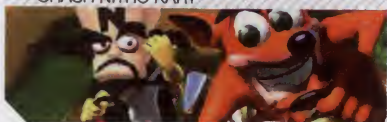
WORSE THAN

LITTLEBIGPLANET



BETTER THAN

CRASH NITRO KART



IN HIS OWN IMAGE

We'll put it out there: we'd rather spend a day dressing our Mods than we would our Sackboys. There are simple controls for creating Mods, karts and tracks, but the more in-depth scheme is damn flexible. With enough patience in the sticker layering palette we bet you'd be able to recreate this month's cover – it's that good. But, if you're feeling super lazy, you can have a custom Mod or kart made just by pressing **Ⓢ** in the creation station. But where's the fun in that?



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

High production values throughout but the loading times are a mood killer. 'Accessibility' was a design protocol.

SOUND

Cringe-worthy script that only kids can tolerate, but the karts themselves grunt and squeal pleasingly.

CONTROLS

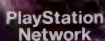
Customisable to the nth degree and throwing your machine around the track is fairly intuitive.

REPLAY VALUE

It could take you the best part of a year to wring the life out of this, and we bet the DLC is forthcoming.

VERDICT: An incredible package, and it's tough to decide what's more appealing: racing or creating?

9



FREE to join
to play

**WHAT'S THE POINT
OF BEING GOOD
IF NO-ONE KNOWS IT?**

THE GAME IS
JUST THE START

*SingStar Chart Hits on PS3 features 30 hot songs including hits from Lady Gaga, The PussyCat Dolls, Guy Sebastian, 30H3, Wolfmother and more – but that's just the start! Start downloading more songs from the SingStore, just \$2.45 each. Start uploading your SingStar performances to My SingStar Online. Start getting a whole lot more from your console.

PG

**Mild Coarse
Language and
Sexual References**



PSB

PlayStation 3



SingStar Chart Hits
- instore July 1.

SONY
make.believe

WORSE THAN

ASSASSIN'S CREED II



BETTER THAN

PRINCE OF PERSIA



And then the gargoyles...well, ejaculated



"Buckle up for some swash, zombie bitches!"



Acrobatics is for the birds



That's the biggest... one of those... we've EVER seen

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTREAL | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$109.95

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

These are the time-bending days of our lives



ONE ENGINE TO RULE THEM ALL

Even though *Forgotten Sands* and *Assassin's Creed II* run on the same Scimitar game engine, Prince is really no match for Ezio when it comes to free-running swordplay; Prince's latest adventure is definitely the more kiddie friendly of the two and so much more linear. That's not to take anything away from the experience as it's still a great game to play, but if you're looking for something as deep you'll need to look elsewhere.

Once upon a time – actually, it's right now – there lives a prince who is pretty awesome at running up and along walls.

It doesn't matter how he can do it, only that he can; watching him nimbly scurry across a wall, then effortlessly jump onto a pole and run along a precarious beam is damn entertaining, and the castle he leaps about in is a pretty good setting for these free-running adventures.

He used to do this way back in 2003, and the fans loved it along with the accompanying sequels, dubbed *The Sands of Time* trilogy. Prince went wayward in 2008, but now he's back to his original self, and the story of *The Forgotten Sands* is set between the first two games in the trilogy.

It's a welcome return to form. Sometimes the areas are open and flow into one another, so it feels glorious to take Prince running along a hallway jumping over yawning chasms, up a wall and eventually into a tower, whereupon the next chapter starts. Other times he'll have to pick his way around the outside of the castle, scaling the walls as huge slabs of stone shift around, threatening to thrust him off and into the rocks below. Then there are puzzles, massive cogs to put into place, time-based switches to flick and platforms to lock away.

They're not quite of *Uncharted* proportions but still entertaining and a couple will leave you scratching your head, even if it's only for a short time.

Prince can still turn back time so mucking up isn't too much of a hassle. He's also bolstered by having access to elemental special attacks, like a fire trail that creates a protective barrier, or a mini tornado that delivers a powerful blast to nearby foes.

Prince can also control water, stopping its flow and making it solid. A flat sheet becomes a wall to run up, columns of water turn into actual columns to climb on and up, while fissures in the wall are monkey bars. It sounds interesting, but it's a pain at times.

To freeze the water you have to press another button, and jumping between solid objects and waterfalls to another beam of water is sometimes a matter of juggling the buttons and at times tying your digits into knots. Its saving grace is that it looks pretty cool, just like the rest of the game.

It's a slow-burning experience. Your first couple of hours feel a bit ho-hum but stick with it. Forgive the disappearing corpses and the occasional odd animation and you'll be hooked all over again. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

The occasional odd jumping animation barely mars the beautiful graphics and seamless transitioning from chapter to chapter.

SOUND

Old Prince is back with a gaily written script that's best described as a Royale with cheese – and ham.

CONTROLS

Fiddly water manipulation spoils it, and sometimes Prince leaps where he shouldn't. The camera's okay, though.

REPLAY VALUE

Low. Once you're through you've seen all there is to see, unless you really, really want to get all the collectibles.

VERDICT: Worth your time, but a tighter script and better swordplay could've made this happily ever after.

8

BACKBREAKER

Remember, Finkle, laces out

INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
 AIE
DEVELOPER:
 NATURALMOTION
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$99.95

Letter limits can sometimes create odd names. When we tried to rechristen a *Backbreaker* team into something more Aussie and hip – like 'Redfern Rappers' – we found ourselves one letter over-budget. A 'p' got dropped and an awkward office legend was born.

Customising your own team, while superfluous in most games, has a greater significance in the utterly unlicensed *Backbreaker* experience. But you now what? *Madden* can keep its official names, because this has euphoria. In layman's terms, euphoria means pre-scripted animations are turfed in favour of AI ones and no tackle ever is the same.

Backbreaker is a great entry-level gridiron game for NFL noobs. The camera puts you right down into the thick of it and there are unobtrusive onscreen markers that show you



➤ We love a good sacking. Wait... what?

exactly what is about to happen with a play. But the main reason you'll enjoy it is because the twin analogue stick controls are as simple as they are rewarding and each tackle is a cacophony of limbs that is extremely visceral and believable. You can go in not knowing a thing and be having a (literal) ball in no time.

Veterans who view *Backbreaker* from any angle other than 'down their nostrils' will find it a worthy diversion – but it won't sustain them long-term. While the season modes are ludicrously barebones compared to *Madden*, there's depth enough in the playbooks and there's a great deal of fun to be milked from the online and/or two player splitscreen modes (which can be versus or co-op).

Backbreaker is a game that will only offer short-time fun to *Madden* veterans. But for everyone else who has been curious about the sport, this game has the potential to blind-side you with entertainment and sack you with its indefinable charm. **A Adam Mathew**



➤ Taking other people's land by force: an American tradition

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Quite pretty and the AI animations are eerily lifelike.

SOUND

Tackle effects could be meatier and there's little music.

CONTROLS

Decent stick twirling mimics your onscreen antics well.

REPLAY VALUE

Splitscreen and online play should amuse for a while.

VERDICT

Worth a look if you're new to gridiron. It's only going to amuse purists for a short time though.

7

SUPERSTARS V8: NEXT CHALLENGE

What does this sequel equal?

INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE:
 RACING
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
 AFA
DEVELOPER:
 MILESTONE
PLAYERS: 1-16
RRP: \$99.95

It's a sequel few saw coming, but Milestone is trying to make a fist of it.

There's good stuff to report here. For one, it features a Chevrolet Lumina CR8 – which is just a HSV Clubsport R8 gussied up with a Chevy badge. Plenty of pelicans already deface their Holdens with Chevy badges anyway, so you should be used to it. Why this wasn't front and centre on the packshot we have no idea.

Two, there are a bunch of other cool touches – like wet tracks that begin to show a dry line throughout the race – and a swag of circuits you'll likely never have seen before (which is refreshing).

Unfortunately it's left stalled on the grid in many other areas. The handling is decent, but too sticky to be masquerading as a sim. The sandtraps must be painted on too, because cars sail across them like butter on a hot pan. This only highlights the myriad holes in the game's penalty system, because

often you can take colossal shortcuts without the game even noticing.

Next Challenge is good enough... for a game from a small-time publisher based on a narrow license. *Next Challenge* is not a big budget title. It's not fancy, it's utilitarian. It's just here to get a job done. It's very much *SBK* with twice as many wheels.

The Italian Superstars series is the main touring car championship in Italy, so we can see why *Next Challenge* could gain some traction over there. If a local developer got it in their heads to make a V8 Supercars game to the same level of quality as *Next Challenge*, Aussie touring car fans would trade their mothers in for a copy.

But there's simply no getting around the fact that the Superstars series has little to no profile in this country. Obviously, that's not the game's fault per se, but it certainly does affect how attached one can get to it.

A Luke Reilly



➤ What are they going to call the third one? Next Next Challenge?

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Sparse at times, but great wet track detail and cars.

SOUND

Hearty engine notes, nice ambient track noise.

CONTROLS

Not really the sim Milestone want you to think it is.

REPLAY VALUE

Not much to keep you around beyond a few sittings.

VERDICT

An improvement from the first, but it's not quite great enough to overcome its lack of relevance.

7



And this is how we roll...

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SPORTS | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX | **PLAYERS:** 1-6 | **RRP:** \$99.95

SKATE 3

Love it or skate it

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

An object dropper allows you to create new lines and join natural ones whenever you please, and *Skate 3* also adds a couple of new tricks (like dark slides), and hones others. Try a hippy jump over a car in *Skate 3* and you find, unlike *Skate 2*, your skater will extend his or her legs out in order to clear it. Everything feels fundamentally the same though. This could be a good thing or a bad thing – but, regardless, it's a side effect of the series' simulation approach. We haven't forgotten it's this approach that won us over in the first place.

It's an added luxury for *Skate 3* developer Black Box that the last game to be released that featured people perched upon plywood was *Tony Hawk RIDE*.

The similarities between the two games, however, begin and end with the fact they both feature skateboards. *Tony Hawk RIDE* is the punchline to 1000 jokes about awful videogames, and *Skate 3* is a very good videogame. The only way there could be a bigger gulf between the two would be if you gathered up every copy of *Tony Hawk RIDE* and buried them in a crater on the far side of the moon.

It wouldn't exactly be a waste of time.

Skate 3, which begins with the best opening montage of the series so far, is similar in many ways to the games that have come before it. Perform in photo shoots, win contests and gain coverage and you'll progress. The aim of *Skate 3* is to found a skate company (which is done immediately) and sell boards (which is done as you complete objectives) and build a team.

The real gimmick this time around is the multiplayer aspect. Offline, having a team of skaters rather than just one doesn't particularly change the dynamic much. Online, things are slightly different. Nearly every task in the game can be tag-teamed with online friends or strangers, and career progression is persistent whether playing online or off. That said, it's not so much the skateboarding equivalent to *Test Drive Unlimited* as we had expected.

We've always been completely enamoured by the *Skate* series. *Skate 2* ruled our lives like no other game since *GTAIV*. Our love affair with *Skate 3* began much in the same fashion.

The bad news is, while we were smitten from the outset, for some reason the infatuation didn't last anywhere near as long this time. It's hard to peg down why, because on paper *Skate 3* makes minor to moderate improvements to the formula in most areas. Multiple difficulty levels, new tricks, more multiplayer support, a vastly improved park and object editor system, plus a completely new city, mean there's been more than enough added here to justify slapping a '3' on the end of it and dishing it out to punters. The fact that Jason Lee is in it as a wacky skateboarding coach is nearly worth the asking price alone.

It's just for all the additions it feels like something is missing. The magic of a great bail in *Skate 2* is diminished by the new ability to spring off the ground during the process. It looks a bit stupid. The ability to personally create epic skate parks is stunted by the fact Black Box hasn't taken a *ModNation Racers*-style approach to sharing these with the rest of the world.

Most crucially, for us at least, the city itself just doesn't have the same zest of New San Vanelona. We've been experimenting with *Skate 3* for weeks now and, while there are plenty of great areas, we haven't found anything that has the same effect on us that bombing off the Murderhorn did in *Skate 2*.

If you've waited until now to give this series a shot, *Skate 3* is as good a place to begin as any. Kickflip the *Tony Hawk* series to the curb and get on board with *Skate*. It's the expert's choice. For *Skate* devotees though? We wouldn't be surprised if, like us, *Skate 3* failed to entirely rekindle the spark we all felt for its predecessor. **Luke Reilly**

WORSE THAN

SKATE 2, KIND OF



BETTER THAN

TONY HAWK RIDE



Bowling for crippled spine



Not even that can make vests cool



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

As good looking as its forebear. Stylish and slick, with nothing particularly garish.

SOUND

The crunch of broken bones, the whirr of wheels, the scrape of trucks on rails... it's all near perfect.

CONTROLS

Familiar, and the new difficulty settings will cater for hardcore fans that crave more realism and newbies too.

REPLAY VALUE

We lost hours in the Super Ultra Mega Park, but we're not sure we'll play this for as long a *Skate 2*.

VERDICT: More of the same in some ways, but certainly better in others. We just haven't fallen in love with the city.

8



INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RACING
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
 AFA
DEVELOPER:
 MILESTONE
PLAYERS: 1-16
RRP: \$99.95

Thanks to a lack of competition from other motorcycle games, Milestone cut some corners with *SBK 09* and made a sketchy, schizophrenic ride that didn't know what it wanted to be. That little performance seemed enough to make Capcom pass on Milestone for its *MotoGP 09/10* project. Let's see whether that was a big enough wake up call for the Italian developer.

Rather than guess what type of player you are, *SBK X* boldly forces you to make a monumental decision right after the title screen. Crap just got binary, son; you're either an arcade rider or a sim nut – and each option plays like a completely different game.

The Arcade mode is essentially a 3D *Super Hang On*. During the brief story mode you can just tape your accelerator down, thanks to forgiving handling, a turbo boost button, and a racing line so helpful it can be seen from space. If that isn't enough, you can't crash and the massive corner chevrons constantly tell you to "go! go! go!"

Good advice.

Thankfully, *SBK X*'s sim mode isn't nearly as helpful, and still offers the in-depth, long-term challenge that hardcore riders crave like plants do electrolytes. The expanded career mode allows you to customise a rider, and compete against more than 80 opponents

on 14 tracks, starting by using 600cc displacement bikes and then grinding your way up to the 1000cc category. Milestone has implemented a new physics system that does away with most of last year's issues with corner braking. Also, there are minor, gameplay enriching tweaks in the engine, such as tire mark residue offering you some extra grip. Small stuff, but it's appreciated.

While the visual engine *still* has trouble keeping pace with the competition, this year's *SBK* does make progress by having an online multiplayer mode that not only works – but it doubles the player count too. *SBK X* manages to be a fairly successful return to form for this chequered series. **A Adam Mathew**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Milestone has stepped up with better overall detail.

SOUND

The bikes sound a bit tinnier than the real thing.

CONTROLS

Braking when ensconced in a corner makes more sense.

REPLAY VALUE

Mucho championships and decent story/career modes.

VERDICT

Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*.
 Caters to both types of players.
 Purists may still hate on it.

7

3D DOT GAME HEROES

Pixels are so last season, darling

INFO

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE:
 ACTION RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
 NAMCO BANDAI
 PARTNERS
DEVELOPER:
 FROM SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$89.95

They say imitation is the sincerest form of a compliment. If that is indeed the case, *3D Dot Game Heroes* runs right up to the original *Legend of Zelda*, plants a big kiss on its face, asks it if it has lost a tonne of weight recently and then proposes marriage.

If Nintendo ever felt litigiously inclined, it could start a copyright case with the plot. Things were wonderful in the kingdom of Dotnia until the Dark Bishop stole six magical orbs and plunged the land into chaos. Now it's up to our brave – recently made 3D – protagonist to rescue Dotnia and put a stop to evil. Deja vu, aplenty.

Essentially, *Dot Game* is a next-gen homage to early NES RPGs. This is 23-year-old game design with a 3D graphical 'overhaul' – no more, no less. Beyond a simple creation tool that lets



He may be 3D but he still has the sprite stuff, son

you build your own protagonist and parts of the world, you'll still get the same utter a lack of quest direction and getting lost in the dungeons happens more often than not.

While this old-school way of playing games is nostalgic and fun to start with, it gets tedious pretty quick. We absolutely salute the developers for recreating the essence of a NES title, but they really should have contemporised some of the aspects of the formula. For example, giving the player minimal clues and forcing them to take upwards of an hour to blindly traverse the overworld in search of the next dungeon doesn't strike us as the best way to remember our misspent youth. It makes us want to play another game.

With a little bit more direction and modernisation, this could have been an amazing time capsule of awesome. But as it stands, the fine balance of nostalgia and irritation isn't something that *Dot Game* nails correctly all the time. **Clint McCredie**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Charming 2D-cum-3D, LEGO-ish visuals.

SOUND

Tunes more infectious than the Oompa Loompa song.

CONTROLS

The digital controls adapt quite well to the PS3 controller.

REPLAY VALUE

A wealth of extra side-missions and hidden treasures.

VERDICT

If you pine for the past, this
 should keep you entertained.
 May frustrate newer gamers.

7



3D > 2D. It's science. Don't fight it



AFTER BURNER: CLIMAX

This is what you call a target-rich environment

INFO

FORMAT: PSN
GENRE: ARCADE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$15.95

Sega's '80s revival continues, following *OutRun Online Arcade* with an equally abundant amount of lush visuals, cock-rock music and arcade thrills. It looks damn pretty, but unless you're really into *After Burner* you can let this one fly by.

After Burner's gameplay hasn't changed much since 1987: get in a plane loaded up with an astonishing amount of bullets and missiles, fly in a straight-ish line towards the horizon and shoot down planes and helicopters in a variety of environments. Its 21st Century hook is the 'climax' meter, a slowly-recharging gauge that slows down time and allows you to unload a 'shock and awe' amount of rockets as you target the kamikaze-like enemy.

As you progress through the game – and it should take you less than 15 minutes to rip through from start to finish, albeit with a couple of diversionary stages along the way – you unlock more options for the EX mode, which follows the path of the regular arcade game but with game-altering options to make it easier or harder; a bigger targeting reticule, increased armour, reduced firepower and so on.

After Burner is a pretty simple kind of game, though that's not a bad thing at all. Like *OutRun*, this is an exercise in getting better and better by looking for patterns and refining your skill in twitch gameplay. Unlike that blissful racer, however, this doesn't have enough charm or longevity to make an evergreen classic. **A Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Beautiful graphics, clips along a decent steady pace.

SOUND

The very finest wailing guitars from Sega's cock-rock library.

CONTROLS

Bullets, missiles, barrel roll. Occasionally tricky though.

REPLAY VALUE

Plenty of EX options to fiddle with, but supremely repetitive.

VERDICT

Spit-polished and gleaming, the arcade thrills wear off pretty fast due to repetitive gameplay.

7

FINAL FIGHT: DOUBLE IMPACT

Wanna be like Mike?



INFO

FORMAT: PSN
GENRE: BEAT 'EM UP
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PROPER GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$15.95



PlayStation
Official Nintendo
Bronze Award

upgrade their abilities to augment your own attacks, things get much more interesting. In terms of presentation and replayability, *Magic Sword* enjoys all the additional trappings and unlocks that *Final Fight* has too.

When you consider the low cost of admission, it's hard to knock this package. This is your gaming heritage – available cheaply and modernised to run on a TV that was just a sci-fi dream back in 1989. You don't just owe it to your childhood self to pick this up. You owe it to *Haggar*. **A Adam Mathew**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

The arcade concept is only missing Cheezels fingerprints.

SOUND

The remixed soundtrack is much appreciated.

CONTROLS

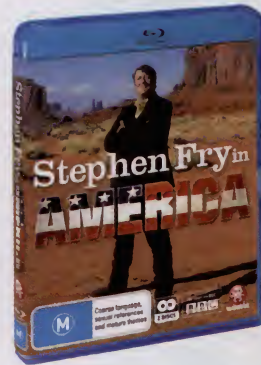
Controls like clockwork. Muscle memory should prevail.

REPLAY VALUE

Two player online/ local antics and a lot of swag.

VERDICT: A wonderful time capsule of fun that is worth replaying. The 'must be online' DRM hurts the package though.

8



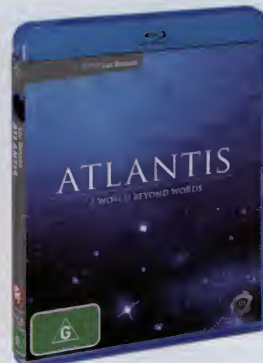
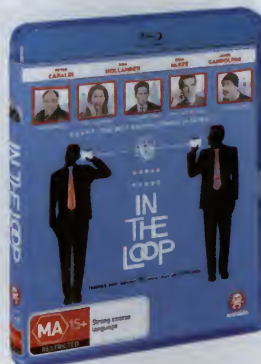
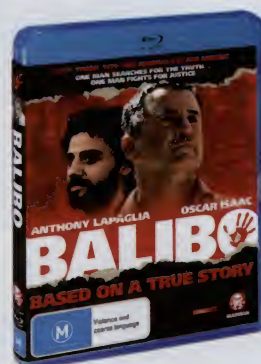
WIN! WIN! WIN!

MADMAN'S ULTIMATE BLU-RAY COLLECTION

If you've got a PlayStation 3 and an HD TV, you need Blu-ray to make the most of it. Madman has you covered. Thanks to Madman we've got a massive 18 Blu-ray collection to give away to one reader, featuring a number of amazing new titles out this month like *Evangelion 1.11*, *Ponyo*, *Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood*, *In The Loop*, *The Big Blue* and *Atlantis*.

For a chance to land this whale of a prize, answer the following question and see the entry instructions on page 26.

Question: In 25 words or less, what's the craziest thing you would do for Madman's Ultimate Blu-ray Collection?



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ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

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Driver



The PlayStation original. Get in early and see what we think is the best in the series so far.

ModNation Racers Demo (PSP)



A taste-test of the most creative game this side of LBP. Perfect for snack-sized karting on the go.

Monsters (Probably) Stole My Princess!



This charming PSP mini platformer needs quick fingers as well as imagination to boost your highscore.

Vidzone



It's like having ABC's *Rage* in your lounge room all the time, and you're the guest programmer

UFC Undisputed 2010 Demo



You've read the review, now check out the action for yourself in this follow up to 2009's smash hit.

DLC

JUST CAUSE 2

Time for another go with Rico

This first load of paid-for DLC is definitely worth your while. For less than three bucks you get a parachute, multi-lock rocket launcher, a pair of jet engines to strap to your chute AND a new jet fighter. The new silk is fairly pointless, being a purely cosmetic addition and only those who pre-ordered the game are going to notice the difference. It's the last three that are going to light your revolutionary fires.

The multi-lock rocket launcher will appeal especially to keen upgraders who spent their weapon parts on the regular

launcher. Order a multi launcher and you'll be sending condolence letters to up to four Panauan widows.

Aerial combatants have another toy with the new fighter, equipped with missiles and mini-guns, but we're most excited by the parachute thrusters that are worth your chump change alone. Give them a squirt of the accelerator on **11** once they're strapped on and you'll be screaming through the air, though their lifespan is limited by the amount of heat they generate. Once the heat gauge is out of the red you're free to use them again.

At the very least they're damned useful for coasting, but they really offer a perfect way (with a bit of practice) to rain down bullets from above – as well offering a quick escape plan when you're low on health.

As with all the gear you buy in game, the launcher, jet and thrusters cost a bundle and you'll need to buy them each time you punch out of this life. It's the only drawback, but this is little deterrent.



VERDICT:

Purchase immediately. A cheap package that's more than a gimmick, opening up a new tactical way to wreak destruction.

INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$3.45

DLC

MODERN WARFARE 2 STIMULUS PACKAGE

Economically sound or a budget oversight?

Fence sitters, this review is for you. The hardcore's already bought it, *Bad Company 2*-lovers have and will turn their noses up, but you with the picket digging into your coccyx need educating.

If you loved all the maps in *COD4*, you're two-fifths of the way to loving the playgrounds in this Stimulus package. 'Crash' (the downed helicopter level) and 'Overgrown' (the one in the dry creek bed with reeds poking up) from *COD4* feature here. If you don't mind paying for stuff that you already own then you're going to move to one side of that fence.

The three new maps are a balanced bunch of CQC, sniping and run-and-gun, and if you've sunk the time into getting your perks into shape you're going to relish the challenge of using your skills in a brand new way.

'Salvage' is a close quarters heaven amongst towering cars and pipes. Keep moving, as being freshly born at a spawn point is barely a safe place to be.

'Storm' throws you into the dark – literally. A rolling thunderstorm reduces visibility in this more open stage set on



multiple levels. It's one of our favourites, if only for the weather effects.

Finally, 'Bailout' will appeal to lone gunman, and defensive players. Wide-open areas in this residential block mean you have to set up camp and get out before you're flanked. It's bright, a contrast to the darkness of 'Storm'.

VERDICT:

It's a bloody steep cover charge - \$7.32 per new map - but once you're in you won't look back.

INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD
PLAYERS: 1-18
RRP: \$21.95

MULTIPLAYER

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Who you callin' a posse?

INFO

GENRE:
ACTION
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER:
ROCKSTAR NORTH
PLAYERS:
1-16
RAP:
\$109.95

Rockstar's *Red Dead Redemption* is an absolute tour de force in terms of single player content, and the decision to use a Mexican standoff to start off every single competitive match bespeaks of yet more gameplay genius. But is this just a one trick pony, or is there multiplayer gold in them thar hills?

There surely is, buckaroo. *RDR* supports 16 players per session and, like *Grand Theft Auto IV*, features an 'anything goes' free roaming mode that serves as a hub that allows you to explore the full expanse of New Austin just as if you'd logged into single player. You'll start out as a lowly greenhorn though; with a pop-gun pistol, a stupid hat and a donkey for a mount. Free spoiler: the latter animal will result in 'more experienced' 13-year-olds calling you an 'ass noob'.

Anyway, much like single player you'll need to undertake tasks listed in your Journal to level up your multiplayer cowboy and earn a massive array of weapons, skins, abilities and titles. XP is handed out for dominating the structured competitive modes, undertaking mini-missions against AI gangs in free roam and by re-doing the challenges you did in single player. You can form a posse with seven other online buddies who are on your free roam server, and additional



XP is earned when riding in a group.

If you're after some more structured fun, *RDR* offers a gunnysack full of team-based Gang matches, Free-For-All shootouts, and Capture The Bag modes. Once the initial Mexican standoff determines a 'pre-match

winner', that sole survivor is able to move to any part of the battlefield in preparation for respawning enemies.

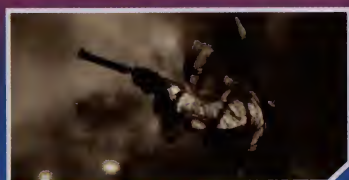
When the smoke and cordite clears away, *RDR* stands tall as quite a wonderful multiplayer experience. If you like fun, it's your huckleberry.


VERDICT:

Whether it's co-op, free roaming by yourself or getting your 'O.K. Coral on' with strangers - *Red Dead Redemption* delivers multiplayer awesomeness.

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

Enemy AI making you yawn? Feel like conquering the world? Take your skills online with this trio


BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics.


FIFA 10

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is quietly brilliant with 10 versus 10 matches.


SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a posse hanging around. Golden rule: winner stays on.

7 THINGS TO DO IN... RED DEAD REDEMPTION



1 DRINKIN'

The euphoria engine does so many things amazingly, but the absolute pinnacle of it's technological prowess is the way it accurately synthesises what it's like to be utterly fall-down, wake-up-next-to-a-cougar (human or otherwise) drunk. Yeehaw!



3 DRAG RACIN'

When you finally earn your lasso, it'll take all of six nanoseconds to try this out yourself. You don't need our prompting, you sick puppy. We only mention it here for the benefit of the non-evil types who lack imagination (read: the voices in our heads)



5 CHICKEN KICKIN'

Red Dead Redemption probably doesn't rate too highly on the RSPCA's "games to do cross-promotional advertising with" list. Because if there's an animal nearby you can kick it. Chickens and dogs are likely targets. Bulls and grizzly bears, not so much.

7 TRAIN JACKIN'

Once you've put the population of a small town under the choo-choo, why don't you try leaping from your horse onto one instead? Once the conductor is toast, we recommend jumping off train bridges or lassoing passing people and wildlife. You can't derail trains, unfortunately.



2 EXTINCTIN'

Pursuant of the last point, animal lovers everywhere may not appreciate this particular idea. But you know what? Get over it. They're virtual animals. No matter how many of them you top, more respawn. At least, that was the original theory we had. This was a buffalo.



4 HEAD CANOEIN'

Head shots; the great leveller. Who among us, from mighty king to syphilis-ridden hobo, doesn't enjoy a good bullet to the melon? Uh... *delivered*, not received, of course. Rockstar has modelled some truly impressive exit wounds here, kids.



6 HOG TYIN'

When you get sick of lassoing people and dragging them around until their face sands off – like, in three years time – perhaps you could try getting more creative with your rope skills. The only thing missing from this scene is a 'twirl moustache' button.

GAME CHEATS

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

NOTE: Enabling codes permanently prevents the game from saving and blocks Trophy unlocks.

Become a nobody
HUMILITY BEFORE THE LORD

Change John into Jack, John's son
OH MY SON, MY BLESSED SON

Decrease bounty
THEY SELL SOULS CHEAP HERE

Enable the sepia filter
THE OLD WAYS IS THE BEST WAYS

Get \$500
THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL, WE THANK YOU!

Get a bunch of guns
I'M AN AMERICAN. I NEED GUNS

Gun set 1
IT'S MY CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT

Infinite ammo
ABUNDANCE IS

EVERYWHERE

Infinite Dead Eye
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IMNNFINITY

Infinite horse stamina
MAKE HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES

Invincibility
HE GIVES STRENGTH TO THE WEAK

Spawn a horse
BEASTS AND MAN TOGETHER

Unlock all areas
YOU GOT YOURSELF A FINE PAIR OF EYES

Unlock the gentlemen's suit
DON'T YOU LOOK FINE AND DANDY

Unlock the treasure hunter Outfit
YOU THINK YOU TOUGH, MISTER?

You will now have no bounty/wanted level
I WISH I WORKED FOR UNCLE SAM

TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Dead to Rights: Retribution*



SCROTALITY

Your mission – should you choose to accept it – is to perform a Shadow groin takedown. Honestly, this is probably one of the easiest achievements out there and you'll get it on the first level. We only mention it here because it is one of the most heinously brutal and best named trophies we've ever come across.



BRAWLER

Complete any level (excluding the Prologue) without firing a shot. To make this simple, select the easiest difficulty mode and choose a mission halfway through the game where Jack has the ability to make Shadow maul his enemies. Rely on that skill (and Jack's disarm ability) and you'll be golden.



HEAD BANGER

If you don't plan ahead you'll probably go through the game and miss out on this Trophy. The idea is to open 10 doors with a hostage head, which can be best achieved by killing all enemies in an area – bar one. Grab this sole survivor and walk him to the next section of the level (usually separated by a door).



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INTERMISSION

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DIRECTOR: KATHRYN BIGELOW | **CAST:** JEREMY RENNER, ANTHONY MACKIE, BRIAN GERAGHTY, GUY PEARCE | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

THE HURT LOCKER (MA15+)

Based on a screenplay written by Mark Boal, a freelance writer who was embedded as a journalist in 2004 with a US bomb squad in Iraq, *The Hurt Locker* is the story of Sergeant First Class William James, a battle-tested veteran who becomes a team leader in Bravo company of a US Army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit during the early stages of the post-invasion period in Iraq in 2004. *The Hurt Locker* is the lowest-grossing film to ever win Best Picture, but don't let that stop you from seeing it.

VERDICT:

Packed with suspense and excitement, *The Hurt Locker* is the best Iraq War film we've ever seen, and director Kathryn Bigelow certainly earned her Oscar.

9

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

The Men Who Stare at Goats

This month's other
Iraq War movie



DAYBREAKERS (MA15+)

DIRECTORS: MICHAEL SPIERIG, PETER SPIERIG

CAST: WILLEM DAFOE, ISABEL LUCAS, ETHAN HAWKE, SAM NEILL, CLAUDIA KARVAN, JAY LAGA'AIA, VINCE COLOSIMO

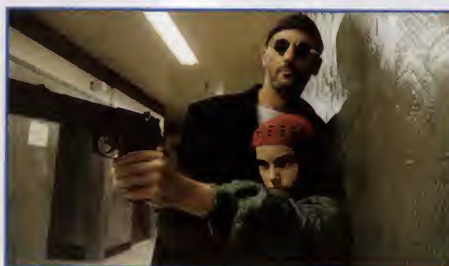
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

It's 2029, and a terrible plague has turned most of the planet's human population into vampires. A vampiric corporation has set out to capture and farm the few remaining humans while desperately researching a blood substitute. Lead vampire haematologist Edward Dalton's (Ethan Hawke) work is interrupted by human survivors led by former vampire Elvis (Willem Dafoe), who has a cure that can save the human race. *Daybreakers* sports quite a cast, and overall it's an interesting clash of *28 Days Later* and *The Matrix*. Unfortunately, what it lacks is any particularly memorable set pieces or excellent dialogue. You can do a lot worse than devoting an evening to it, but we'd be quite surprised if *Daybreakers* has the stamina to stick around as some kind of cult vampire classic.

VERDICT:

Polished and entertaining enough, but probably not worth multiple viewings.

7



LEON: THE PROFESSIONAL (R18+)

DIRECTOR: LUC BESSON

CAST: JEAN RENO, NATALIE PORTMAN, GARY OLDMAN

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Everybody's favourite Frenchman Jean Reno (*Ronin*, *The Da Vinci Code*) is Leon, a deadly and efficient killer. He lives a routine life, alone in New York with just his pot-plant for company – until the day his 12-year-old neighbour Mathilde (Nathalie Portman in her first film) takes refuge in his flat to avoid a group of ruthless dirty cops (led by professional psychopath Gary Oldman) who've just massacred her parents, her sister and her baby brother. Leon reluctantly takes Mathilde under his wing, and the two go on the run. But Mathilde wants revenge, and Leon can teach her how to exact it. This movie has been *begging* for a local release for years, and it's finally here. It's a bit like *Lost in Translation* with guns. From the director of *The Fifth Element*.

VERDICT:

A fantastic thriller about love, revenge and redemption. Get it now.

9



THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS (M)

DIRECTOR: GRANT HESLOV

CAST: GEORGE CLOONEY, EWAN MCGREGOR, JEFF BRIDGES, KEVIN SPACEY

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

The Men Who Stare at Goats film follows Ann Arbor *Daily Telegram* reporter Bob Wilton (Ewan McGregor), who one day interviews Gus Lacey, a man who claims he has psychic abilities. Bob dismisses Lacey as loco. Soon after this, Bob's wife leaves him for his editor and Bob, in anger, flies to Kuwait to investigate the Iraq War. However, he stumbles onto the story of a lifetime when he meets Special Forces operator, Lyn Cassady (George Clooney). Lyn reveals that he was part of an American army unit training psychic spies (or "Jedi Warriors") to develop a range of parapsychological skills including invisibility, remote viewing, cloud bursting, walking through walls, and intuition. Oddball, yes?

VERDICT:

An awesome cast and some great moments, but a little too wacky at times.

7



FANTASTIC MR. FOX (PG)

DIRECTOR: WES ANDERSON

CAST: GEORGE CLOONEY, MERYL STREEP, JASON SCHWARTZMAN, BILL MURRAY, MICHAEL GAMBON, WILLEM DAFÖE, OWEN WILSON, BRIAN COX, ADRIEN BRODY
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Based on the classic story by Roald Dahl, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* is the tale of a sly fox who steal his meals from one of three crooked farmers every night. With his keen sense of smell, and the farmers' distinctive diets, Mr. Fox has no problem evading them – but after some time the greedy farmers band together to end Mr. Fox. From Wes Anderson (director of cult comedy favourites like *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*) *Fantastic Mr. Fox* was the highest rated animated flick of 2009, behind *Up*, but struggled to find an audience. Perhaps it was too clever for most.

VERDICT:

Highly recommended, but it'll bore kids and less savvy folk.

8



IN THE LOOP (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: ARMANDO LANUCCI

CAST: PETER CAPALDI, TOM HOLLANDER, GINA MCKEE, JAMES GANDOLFINI

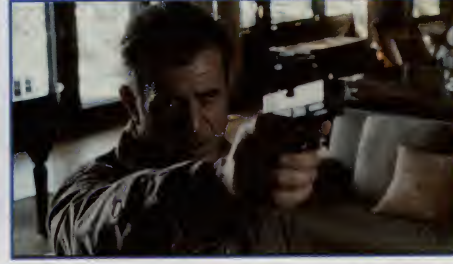
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

The US President and UK Prime Minister are after a war – but not everyone agrees that a war is a good thing. The United States' General Miller doesn't think so – and neither does the British Secretary of State for International Development, Simon Foster. Unfortunately, after Simon *accidentally* backs military action on TV, he suddenly finds himself with a lot of friends in Washington, DC. If Simon can become tight with the right people in DC, and if he and his assistant can prevent the Prime Minister's top spin-doctor rigging the vote at the UN, they can halt the war. *In The Loop* is bit like *This Is Spinal Tap* for the Iraq War, and it's quite funny. If politics is truly anything like this, however, we're all damned. Unfortunately, we suspect it is.

VERDICT:

Surprisingly funny political satire. Should be a real sleeper hit.

8



EDGE OF DARKNESS (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: MARTIN CAMPBELL

CAST: MEL GIBSON, DANNY HUSTON, RAY WINSTONE

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Single father Thomas Craven (Mel Gibson) is a veteran homicide detective for the Boston Police Department. When his only child, 24-year-old Emma, is murdered on the steps of his home, everyone believes that *he* was the real target. However, he soon suspects otherwise and sets about digging up details on his daughter's secret life and her killing. His investigation leads him into dangerous territory, and to a shadowy government operative Darius Jedburgh (Ray Winstone), who has been sent in to clean up the evidence. Revenge thrillers worked for Denzel Washington and Liam Neeson, and Gibson does a great job selling this one. Stay in front of the camera Mel! From the director of the last two James Bond films.

VERDICT:

A vintage revenge thriller that offers nothing new, but works well.

8

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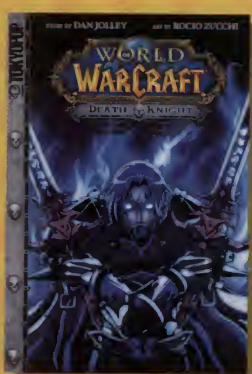
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INTRODUCTION MISSION

ANIME SPECIAL



FULL METAL ALCHEMIST BROTHERHOOD



A great thing about anime is that they're not shy about doing remakes – and turning them around quickly. The '90s *Vampire Hunter D* movie was way better than the '80s one, and the new *Hellsing* series leaves the old one in the dust. Likewise, the new series of *Full Metal Alchemist* is a tremendous improvement on the old one, telling a tighter, taunter version of the events depicted in the manga, as well as launching into all-new adventures.

For those who came in late, *FMA* concerns two teenaged brothers, Edward and Alphonse Elric, who are dab hands at the art of alchemy – transmogrifying one substance into another. Only they don't use it for boring things like turning lead into gold; instead, they use this ability like a super-power. Edward can turn any substance into a weapon, including his bionic arm, which he can morph into a sword at will, T-1000 style. And Alphonse IS a weapon – a nasty alchemy accident transferred his soul into a living suit of armour.

Together, Edward and Alphonse fight spies and terrorists, but that's just their day job. What really drives them is the hope that they might one day learn the secret of restoring their humanity.

VERDICT:

A super-charged reboot of one of the hottest anime shows around. In *Brotherhood*, *FMA* is bigger, bolder, and badder than ever.



GURREN LAGANN - THE MOVIE!!!

You may recall a meme that spread around the internet when they first switched on that jumbo atom smasher, the Large Hadron Collider: "Row-row, fight tha' powah!" It was a reference to *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*, the smash hit anime series from studio Gainax, the guys who brought us *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Like all Gainax shows, *Gurren Lagann* borrows from established anime clichés: giant robots, crazed villains, and a young hero out to prove himself through hard work and guts. And like all Gainax shows, *Gurren Lagann* has a little something extra – bold imagery, a warped perspective, and 'fan service' (tits). Above all, *Gurren Lagann* has big ideas; it champions the creative drive towards self-improvement that separates humanity from the beasts – a 'Spiral Power' that could literally blow the top off the universe.

It was 27 episodes of must-see, life-altering viewing, and now *Gurren Lagann* has been compressed into a feature-length motion picture.

VERDICT:

Join young Simon as he battles in his mighty robot against mutant beasts in a freakish *Mad Max* future. Nothing is exactly as it seems.



INTERMISSION

ANIME SPECIAL

EVANGELION: 2.0 YOU CAN (NOT) ADVANCE

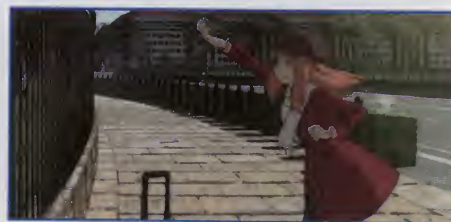
Neon Genesis Evangelion: the biggest anime series of all time. The protectors of Eva's post-apocalyptic, near-future world are towering robots whose size and power are only matched by the mental problems of the teenagers who pilot them. Back in the 20th Century Eva blew the socks off the anime-viewing public, and now the blockbuster TV show is being re-booted, re-tooled, and re-imagined as a series of major motion pictures.

And to any veteran anime fans who were put off by the two Eva movies that came out in the '90s, take heart – these ones actually make sense.

While the first of these new movies didn't stray too far from the source material, the second takes bold steps in strange new directions, adding new scenes, new content, and even a major new character, the spunky teen girl robot pilot Mari Makinami. Even established, iconic characters like the dysfunctional, aggressive Asuka have been cast in a more sympathetic light.

VERDICT:

Basically, the bigger an anime fan you are, the more jollies you'll get from these Eva movie remakes.



EDEN OF THE EAST

Think of it as an anime version of *The Bourne Identity* – and in the best possible way. A young dude called Akira finds himself running around one day in Washington DC with an erased memory, a handgun, and a mobile phone charged up with around eight million dollars in credits. And nothing else. Was this nude young man in the middle of assassinating someone, or was something even weirder going on? An ordinary girl called Saki soon finds herself swept up into this bizarre sequence of events, and against a backdrop of conspiracy and terrorism the two of them have to figure out what to make of it all. And survive, obviously.

Eden of the East is a modern day political thriller, but it avoids many of the cliches and common assumptions that permeate American live-action blockbusters. The attention to detail is impressive, and the animation from Production IG (*Ghost in the Shell*, *Blood: The Last Vampire*, etc) is top notch. A feast for the eyes and the brain.

VERDICT:

Conspiracies, conundrums, and incredible visuals – an international thriller the likes of which you've never seen.



SUMMER WARS

Kenji's a typical nerd, in the both the best and the worst sense of the word. His obsession with puzzle solving has made him one of the best mathematicians in the world, but his awkwardness renders him a social outcast. Things start to change for Kenji, however, when the hottest girl in school offers him the perfect summer job: to pretend to be her fiancée, and thus appease her ultra-conservative rels.

At first, this goes very badly for Kenji, as the delightful Natsuki's extended famil turn out to be a pack of freaks – then things get worse when he accidentally unlocks the power to destroy the internet. With the world plunging into chaos, and a rogue botnet threatening to bring civilisation to a standstill, Kenji must draw on not only the extreme geek knowledge of the computer age, but also the wisdom of Natsuki's 90-year-old great-grandmother. Because ultimately it's not just what you know, it's who you know.

VERDICT:

More whimsy, romance, and bittersweet insight into the human condition from the creators of *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time*.



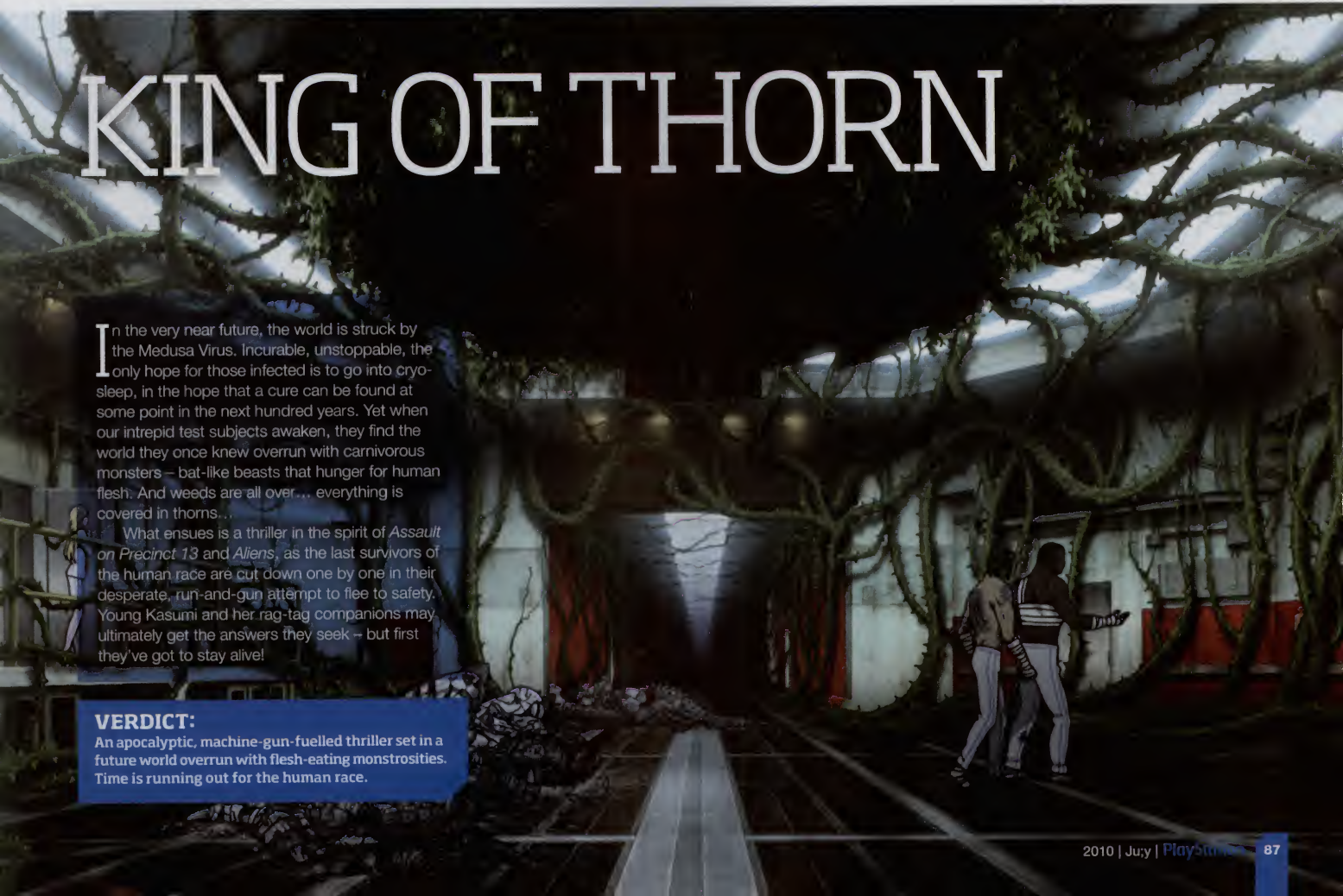
KING OF THORN

In the very near future, the world is struck by the Medusa Virus. Incurable, unstoppable, the only hope for those infected is to go into cryo-sleep, in the hope that a cure can be found at some point in the next hundred years. Yet when our intrepid test subjects awaken, they find the world they once knew overrun with carnivorous monsters – bat-like beasts that hunger for human flesh. And weeds are all over... everything is covered in thorns...

What ensues is a thriller in the spirit of *Assault on Precinct 13* and *Aliens*, as the last survivors of the human race are cut down one by one in their desperate, run-and-gun attempt to flee to safety. Young Kasumi and her rag-tag companions may ultimately get the answers they seek – but first they've got to stay alive!

VERDICT:

An apocalyptic, machine-gun-fuelled thriller set in a future world overrun with flesh-eating monstrosities. Time is running out for the human race.



PERMISSION

ANIME SPECIAL



DRAGONBALL Z KAI



Look... up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Goku, a strange visitor from another planet with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. Goku, who can change the course of mighty rivers, bend steel in his bare hands, and who fights a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the mysterious Dragon Balls.

Epic combat, epic plots, epic haircuts – there are over 9000 good reasons to like *Dragonball Z*, and fans of this classic series will soon be able to enter the high-def era. Just in time for the 20th anniversary of *Dragonball Z* mania, this new series is re-mastered, re-cut, and re-animated to look its blistering best on both DVD and Blu-ray. But they haven't just re-jigged the visuals to fit into a widescreen format; they've also trimmed down the plot, so it's a closer fit to the original manga. Those multi-episode fight scenes that seemed to go on forever are a thing of the past.

VERDICT:

Digitally remastered in high-def, with new animation and all the boring bits edited out. This is *Dragonball Z* the way it was always meant to be seen.

INITIAL D 4TH STAGE

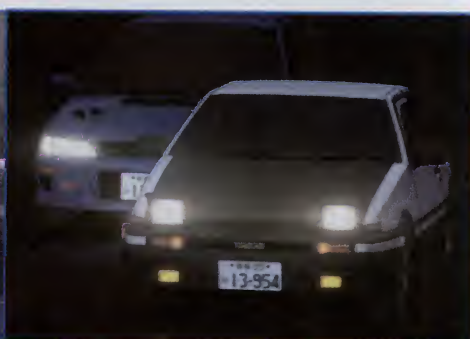
The samurai spirit lives in the winding mountain roads of rural Japan, where young men risk limb and life in one of the most dangerous forms of competitive activity yet devised: drift racing. By the fourth season of *Initial D*, young Takumi Fujiwara has not only become a dab hand at tearing around hairpin turns in controlled power slides, but he's joined an elite racing team: 'Project.D'. Together, they tour the countryside, challenging a succession of local racing cliques for drift racing supremacy.

Initial D has a lot in common with more fantastical shows like *Bleach* or *Naruto*, in that each new opponent brings a new arsenal of devious tricks and techniques that the hero must outsmart to overcome. Yet it's more than just a 'fight of the week' show – *Initial D* has more grounded, human characters, and its relentless pacing builds drama and intensity in a way that few TV shows ever achieve – anime or otherwise.

The technical detail is incredible, too – these guys never stop talking about their superchargers, tyres, fuel injection, etc. As opposed to a supernatural action show where the author just makes stuff up, all the rev-head insanity in *Initial D* is based on fact, with legendary racer Keiichi Tsuchiya, the 'Drift King', acting as a consultant.

SUMMARY:

Initial D 4th Stage is the long-awaited next chapter of an addictive street racing classic. Car wonks will spoooge.



IN ALCHEMY, ALL MUST OBEY THE
LAW OF EQUIVALENT EXCHANGE...

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST BROTHERHOOD

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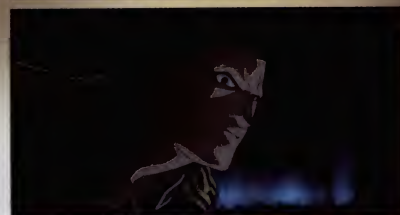
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EVANGELION: 1.11 YOU
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Edward and Alphonse Elric's reckless disregard for alchemy's fundamental laws ripped half of Ed's limbs from his body and left Al's soul clinging to a cold suit of armour. To restore what was lost, the brothers scour a war-torn land for the Philosopher's Stone.

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MANGA
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INTERMISSION

AT THE CINEMA

GET HIM TO THE GREEK (TBC)

DIRECTOR: NICHOLAS STOLLER | CAST: RUSSELL BRAND, JONAH HILL, SEAN COMBES | IN CINEMAS: JUNE 17

Nicholas Stoller's sequel to the excellent *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* has all the ingredients to be a hit. Russell Brand reprises and expands his role as self-obsessed rocker Aldous Snow and Jonah Hill (playing a completely different character from that in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*) is Aaron Green, a record company schmuck tasked by his domineering boss (Combes) to take Snow from London to LA where he'll play at the Greek Theater. The gig's a big deal, as Aldous's last album – *African Child* – tanked, slammed as being the third worst thing to happen to Africa since war and famine.

After a promising start, where it's clear the wide-eyed Green doesn't have a single clue about how to handle the wild and impetuous Snow or talk to famous people who run in the same

circles, *Get Him To The Greek* rapidly loses momentum.

There's very little chemistry between the two leads though everyone looks like they're having fun (Brand especially, ignites during one of his character's withdrawal phases). The jokes, too, are mostly pretty dumb, and it feels more like a series of sketches thrust together. An especially chaotic and drawn out fight scene where Combes's character goes from being the sleeper hit of the film to just plain weird seals Greek's fate, and by the time the credits roll the production feels very tired. A bummer, as Australia's own Rose Byrne is a cracker in this, and there are tons of cameos that constantly surprise. Recommendation? Re-watch *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and check out one of Russell Brand's live DVDs instead. You'll be guaranteed more laughs.

THE BUZZ

What's *really* going on behind the scenes



3D is set to take a pretty massive chunk of the movie industry – and movie producers think that if they can put a film in 3D, they can cash in on the *Avatar* market. That might be the case for Orlando Bloom who is to star in the 3D remake of *The Three Musketeers*. He'll be playing the Duke of Buckingham (that is, the bad guy).

From muskets to meat cleavers/garrote wire/silenced pistols, we're in store for *Hitman 2*. Spanish director Daniel Benmayor has been hired by 20th Century Fox for the film, based loosely on *Hitman 5* – a game which we know exists, but know nothing about. With only three films under his belt, does he have the ability to make this video game to movie adaptation any good? The first *Hitman* didn't get many burns on seats but, then

again, the game was just about killing. What more can you expect really?

Megan Fox has walked from *Transformers 3* leaving us wondering if a movie primarily about boobs and giant robots can work without the former.

New Line is putting together a script for a feature film version of *MacGyver*, based on the adventure series that ran from 1985-1992. New Line plans to make *MacGyver* straight-faced but still keep it fun. Really though, unless Richard Dean Anderson is up for it this is massive waste of time.

Speaking of Nicholas Stoller (see above), Stoller and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* star Jason Segal are co-writing *The Greatest Muppet Movie Ever Made*. Stoller has called The Muppets "the gateway drug for all comedy nerds."

ALSO IN CINEMAS



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: SAMUEL BAYER

CAST: JACKIE EARLE HALEY, KYLE GALLNER

He's back to kill you slow in your dreams again. A new version of the 1984 original that made Freddy Kruger (Haley) become one of the most iconic characters in cinema. A horribly disfigured madman, who was thought to be dead for years, begins to haunt a group of high school kids within their dreams – and when he kills them in their dreams, they die for real. Their only choice and source of protection is to keep each other awake, but when they're asleep, there is no escape.

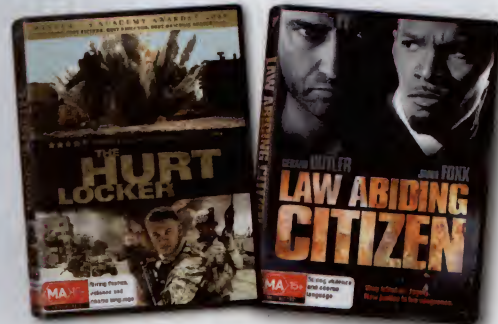
THE WOG BOY 2: THE KINGS OF MYKONOS (M)

DIRECTOR: PETER ANDRIKIDIS

CAST: NICK GIANNPOULOS, VINCE COLOSIMO

Now 10 years older, a phone call has Steve (Giannopoulos) and Frank (Colosimo) on the first plane to the island of Mykonos. Uncle Panos has died and has left Steve a tavern and a beach to his name worth €2.5 million. With the combination of Greek islands and Giannopoulos' appreciation of the female form, it means that hardly a minute goes by without a beautiful girl walking along the screen. Only fans of the first will get the most enjoyment out of this.

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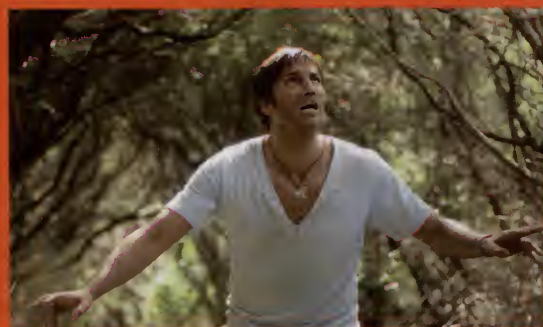
THE HURT LOCKER



CARRIERS



LAW ABIDING CITIZEN



LONG WEEKEND



LOVE HAPPENS

THE BEST PSN GAMES

Buy and play in your home!

BRAID
DEVELOPER: Hothead
PLAYERS: 1



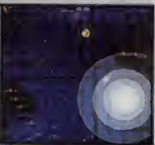
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming as hell, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man. Buy it.

WIPEOUT HD
DEVELOPER: SCE
PLAYERS: 1-8



Yes, it's a HD remix of tracks from the PSP versions, but *HD* is too sublime to ignore. Utterly gorgeous, running at a blistering framerate and handles superbly. Mandatory. We may not a fully-fledged, dedicated PS3 version of the series for now, but this will do fine.

EVERYDAY SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Queasy Games
PLAYERS: 1



Don't be fooled by the sparse art style. This cunningly blends music in with the action that turns it from a dual-stick shooting whimsy into a highly addictive blaster. It's very easy to lose hours and hours to this game as you strive to make it through the tough stages.

FLOWER
DEVELOPER: thatgamecompany
PLAYERS: 1



High concept and totally pretty, it plays like a dream. Guide petals on the wind using the motion-sensing of your DualShock 3. You will be amazed. More than one OPS staffer has lost sleep trapped in this game.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2
DEVELOPER: Capcom
PLAYERS: 1-2



It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter*, and nor should it. Stuffed with 56 characters, this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut, you should have this already

BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1



Bionic Commando Rearmed is a prime example of what many love about the PSN: being a platform for updates of classics. It's pure gameplay – and rock hard. We don't know why you'd bother playing the recent remake instead.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the *best*

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North **PUBLISHER:** Rockstar **PLAYERS:** 1-16

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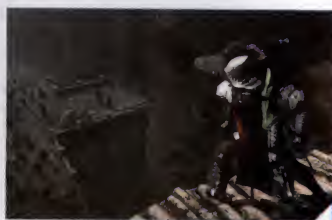


UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-12

10



BAYONETTA



"It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy, and weird. It takes skill to make it so well, and it takes a Japanese mindset to make it so freakishly perverted. Smooth and stylish: the ultimate evolution of *Devil May Cry* style action."

DEVELOPER: Platinum Games
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1

9



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

"A far more compelling story than the revolutionary original, there's more to see and do, and more ways of dealing death than before. Ubisoft has tweaked the climbing mechanic to make it feel part puzzler, but all action."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft
Montreal **PUBLISHER:** Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now. Seriously."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-16

10



HEAVY RAIN

"Kudos to Quantic Dream for continuing to evolve its unique brand of gameplay and storytelling. Compelling, different, addictive – *Heavy Rain* is all of these things. This game will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. We just need people to stop telling us it's a revolution."

DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

8



GOD OF WAR III

"Easily eclipses anything out there and reclaims it's rightful place at the pinnacle of its genre. Believe the hyperbole. *God of War III* deserves an honoured place – both in your own personal collection and the mighty PlayStation Parthenon"

DEVELOPER: Santa Monica Studios **PUBLISHER:** Sony
PLAYERS: 1

10



JUST CAUSE 2

"Although there are a few technical shortcomings, *Just Cause 2* generates more fun per second than any other open-world title. So much better than the original, Avalanche has crafted one of the most exciting and entertaining open-world romps we've experienced in years."

DEVELOPER: Avalanche
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1

9

SHOOTER



BORDERLANDS



"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

9



KILLZONE 2



"Visually Killzone 2 runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. Killzone 2 is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK 2



"Plot-wise, this doesn't match the original. However, the combat has been spliced to near-perfection. A more than worthy sequel that should easily suck you back under for another tumble."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-10

8



MODERN WARFARE 2



"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, MW2 is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-18

10



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin Entertainment PUBLISHER: AIE PLAYERS: 1-16

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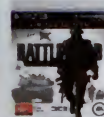


ALIENS VS PREDATOR

"Possibly the greatest movie-inspired game ever. This positively oozes atmosphere and is a must for the fans. Wonderfully visualised, incredibly immersive and true to its inspiration."

DEVELOPER: Rebellion PUBLISHER: Sega PLAYERS: 1-4

9



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

"In almost every way *Bad Company 2* technically outclasses the original, but that's to be expected. We just miss the mischief. But maybe that's just us. Even still, this is a top-tier shooter that's more than up to the task of standing side-by-side with *MW2*."

DEVELOPER: DICE PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-24

8



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

9



MAG

"You will need to put some hours in before you get to unlock the best goodies, and it's the kind of game that requires fairly frequent attention, but the pay off is one of the singularly most compelling and captivating shooters to date."

DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-256

9

TOP 5 MOST ANNOYING ENEMIES



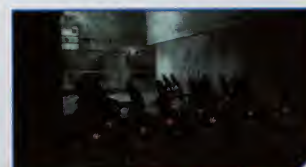
INFAMOUS - REAPERS

Just when you think you've fried them all, one starts to shoot you from the most awkward spot – five kilometres away, on a roof behind a garbage can – then kills you in the process.



FAR CRY 2 - ANYONE

This certainly was a fun game to play, but without a 'prone' button you would get spotted way too easily and when your foes did flank you, they just would not go down, even after a full magazine is pumped into them.



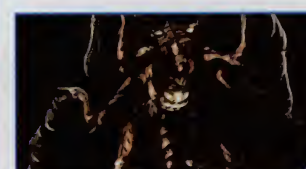
MGS4 - DWARF GEKKO

You first see these little bally-arm things on your arrival at Shadow Moses. Sure they're easy to kill, but holy crap there is a lot of them! When they jump on you and zap you, repeatedly, that really gets annoying.



POP; WARRIOR WITHIN - BLADEDANCERS

These hellish girls jump about, and disappear just before you go for the killer blow, only to reappear and bite your neck. We need our necks for breathing and such.



RESIDENT EVIL 4 - REAPERS

These Reapers are creepy as, hard to kill, and unpredictable. Not to mention their weak spot keeps changing as well.

THE BEST PSP GAMES

Small system. Big games.

LITTLEBIG PLANET

DEVELOPER: SCE
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1



Retaining all of the fun of one the PS3's most entertaining platformers, this version sacrifices little on the transition to the small screen. Incredibly deep, engaging – and fun.

MH: FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-4



Monster Hunter is a system seller in native Japan, and it deserves that accolade here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, and rewards in spades if you're able to put the effort in.

WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-8



Its predecessor, *Pure*, laid the groundwork. It's not that this does much that differently, it just does it better. Beautifully animated and weighted just right, it's a futurist's dream come true.

GTA: CHINATOWN WARS

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



Hilarious. Violent. Addictive. Yes, it's a port of a DS title, but it's a port done right, and still it rebels against the style of other *GTA* games. A tightly scripted, mature and entertaining package.

MGS: PORTABLE OPS

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Mindscape
PLAYERS: 1



As a chapter in an epic story that's kept PlayStation fans rapt for more than a decade, this is essential. As an adventure game in its own right, it's bliss. A fine action title, no matter what.

SOULCALIBUR

DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-2



Yes, it's even better than *Tekken*. Beautiful to look at and easy to pick up and play, it also has *God of War*'s Kratos as a playable character. Brimming with unlockables, it's a classic.

RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Madman **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT

"*Dirt 2* is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *Dirt* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



SPLIT/SECOND

"*Split/Second* hasn't usurped the arcade racing king (see: the *Burnout* games), but this series debut signals it as a more than worthy adversary. There are plenty of tricks here to tempt you away from *Burnout Paradise*."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock Studios **PUBLISHER:** THQ
PLAYERS: 1-8

8



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of *V8 Supercars* and *Colin McRae: Dirt* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the *V8* DLC *Codies* promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*SHIFT* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego **PUBLISHER:** Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of spitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND 2

"Rock Band 2 is the best music game around. Import *Rock Band* and *LEGO Rock Band* to your hard drive, access the DLC, and you'll have over 1000 songs at your fingertips. You can't fault it."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

10



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fuelled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, *SKATE 2* is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the *FIFA* franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. *FIFA 10* is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9

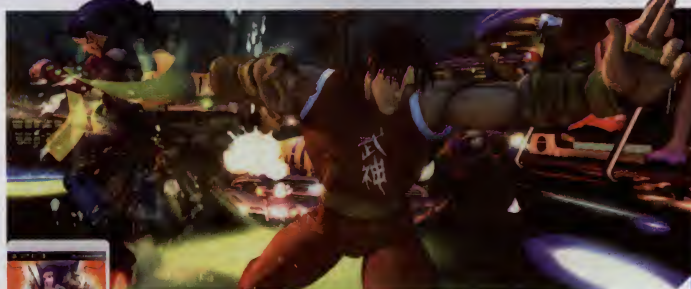
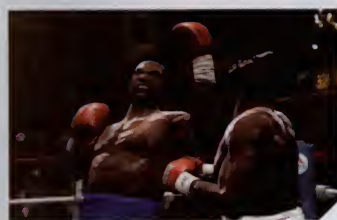


FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, *Fight Night Round 4* recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

"With the 'vanilla' version's vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price, *SSFIV* belongs in everyone's collection."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

"The new undisputed baron of sports fighting, though its improvements aren't all that radical. But while it hasn't made leaps and bounds on last year's effort, it is a straight jab in the right direction."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-2

8



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, *Virtua Tennis 2009* is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



DJ HERO

"A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick once you've played it. Utterly addictive, and great value when you consider it's chock full of great mixes you'll never hear anywhere else. An excellent game, and great for parties."

DEVELOPER: Freestyle Games
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon *GHWT* in a number of ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Primal
CONSOLE: PlayStation 2
YEAR: 2003

THE MOMENT:

Back in 2001, you became Jen. A 'half-breed' who is almost killed by the demon Belahzur.

With the help of your little stone gargoyle friend, Scree, you're freed from your your body and taken through a Rift Gate and into the Nexus. As you enter the four realms of Solum, Aquis, Aetha and Volca you really gain an understanding of how vast and immersive these worlds really are.

The first time you become a demon has to be one of the most exciting parts in the game. You are looking for Hern, the King of Solum, who happens to be in temple. He's praying to the gods in an effort to find his son. With Scree at your side you slowly make your way across the long bridge and, after finding all those damn lodestones (the times we nearly threw the controller because we were just one short!), Scree possesses the statue, swivels the head and lets you enter the temple.

Hern is praying in a circle, speaking in his native language. He calls out to Jen, who then walks into the circle and begins to glow green. This is when things get interesting. Hern grabs Jen's arms, and puts a green stone next to her vambraces and makes her transform. This was completely unexpected as the transformation happens in a very unorthodox way. Jen is in pain as it's happening, and you really feel for her. But it's worth it. For us, at least.

Now Jen can kick arse with green claws, Wolverine-style, jump higher and run faster. When you have all four of the demon powers, the transformation system proves to be an awesome game mechanic that is yet to be replicated today. Every time you shift form you really feel like you are changing and becoming a demon, emphasised by the slow-mo pan around Jen as she gradually morphs into each of the four demons. If you can find this game anywhere, it's a definite keeper.



1999 ROLLCAGE

This is how we used to roll

By the time *Rollcage* came out, Psygnosis was well known for developing the seminal hits *Wipeout* and *Wipeout 2097*, and *Wipeout 3* was just about to reach full term. In between bandicoots and tomb raiders, the anti-grav racers were yet another definition of what it meant to own a PlayStation, so it made perfect sense for the publisher to try and further that success with another futuristic racing game. Enter *Rollcage*.

Though it wasn't developed by the big P, *Rollcage* incorporated *Wipeout*'s ethos. Outlandish yet plausible vehicles, rollercoaster-like tracks in varied environments, weapons, a superlative frame rate backed by an electro soundtrack and, most importantly, a racing 'hook'. In *Wipeout* it was about the ships being anti gravity. In *Rollcage* it was about the massive

vehicles defying gravity.

With wheels larger in diameter than their bodies, the *Rollcage* 'cars' could flip and tumble, so there wasn't a particular right way up. Rocketing into a tunnel at triple-digit-speeds allows 'rollcagers' to mount the walls and ceilings. Its science was a bit wonky, but basically more speed roughly translated into more grip, and a tunnel's ceiling could contain a useful cache of boost pads or weapons.

Also dotted around the track were staples like shortcuts and massive jumps, and memorising their position was the difference between first place and slamming into a wall or other structure, erasing your chance of a podium finish. It was possible to use the scenery to your advantage, however. Ramming through a skinny support beam on an apartment block or

aiming a missile at a floating sign would send the structure tumbling down and across the track, falling in the way of – or, more hopefully, on top of – other racers. The most recent game to use this mechanic? *Split/Second*, which relies heavily on environmental destruction.

Rollcage is a fine example of an arcade racing game. It's fast, the cars have a slightly 'loose' feel about them, there's destruction and weapons: a combination of these qualities could apply to current and upcoming arcade racers such as *Burnout*, the aforementioned *Split/Second* and *Blur*.

It was a technically impressive game, too. Smoke, skidmarks, explosions, light reflecting off vehicles and that frame rate that rarely slipped, though the resolution stings in 2010. It arrived at a time when the PSone was hitting its strides in the racing genre, alongside *Gran Turismo 2*, *Colin McRae Rally* and the *Wipeout* series.

So what happened to the series? It did well enough to warrant a sequel, *Rollcage Stage II*, which turned down the twitchy handling and threw in heaps more tracks and cars. After 2000, though, it's gone to ground, as Attention To Detail went into liquidation. Whilst a fan made sequel for PC is currently being built, a true PlayStation-based successor is yet to be announced. **Paul Taylor**



CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION
GENRE: RACING
DEVELOPER: ATTENTION TO DETAIL
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ENGLAND
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$15



I AM A MUSIC MAN

There was a limited edition of *Rollcage* released called, funnily enough, *Rollcage: Limited Edition*. It wasn't in a tin, or with a set of night-vision goggles, but had a copy of the game's soundtrack on a separate CD. The tunes were 'phat' for 1999. Fatboy Slim featured, along with E-Z Rollers and a few other British DJs. You could, however, get (most of) it for free by inserting the *Rollcage* game disc into your computer's disc drive, start your music management software, and bingo. There it is. This trick also worked with a few other PlayStation games of the time, including the sonically superior *Wipeout 2097*.

INSANE

IT SHOULD BE A GAME

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YOU DRIVE A PILE
OF GARBAGE**



**SO WE PILEDROVE YOUR PILE
SO YOU CAN CRY
WHEN YOU CRY.**

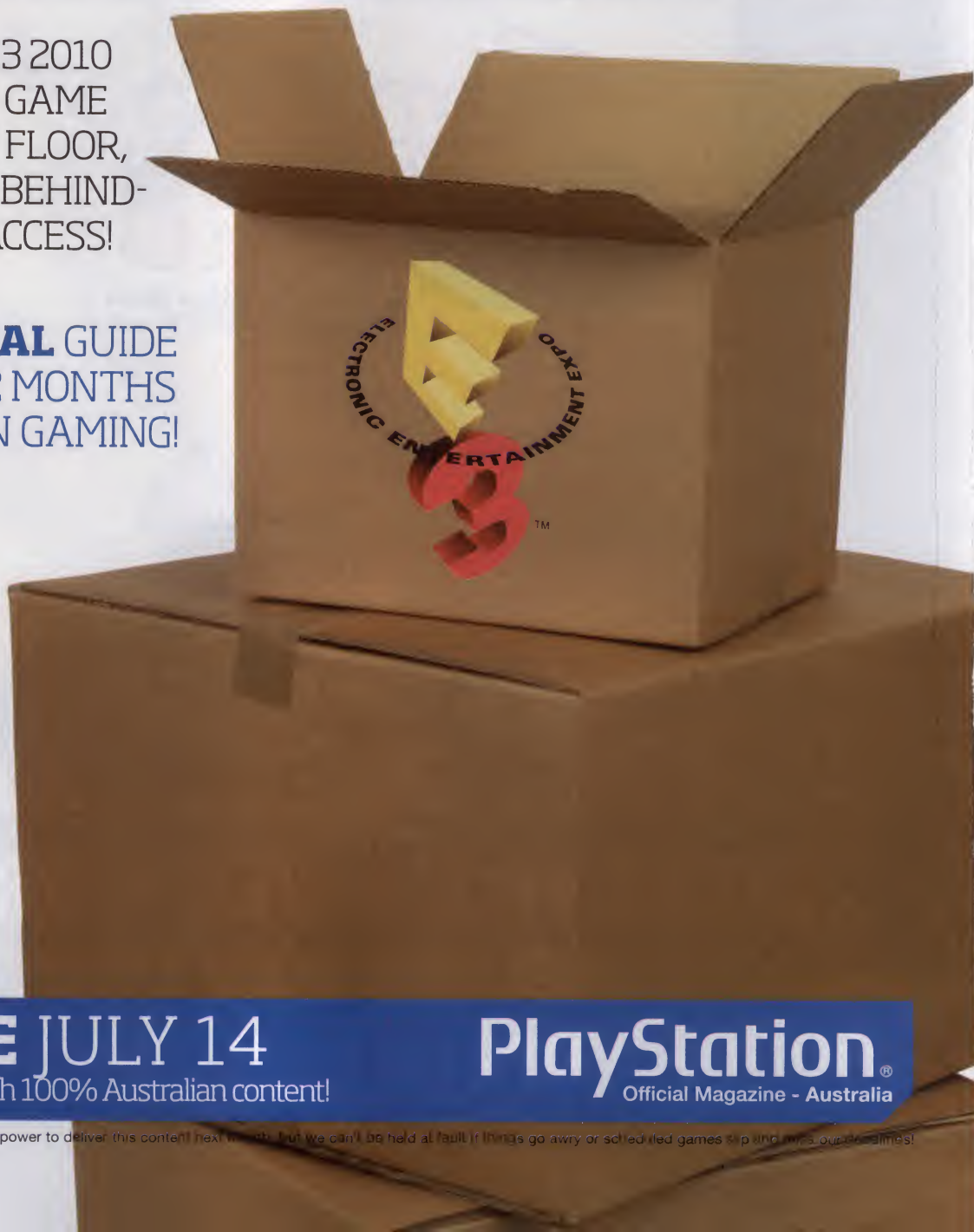
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